

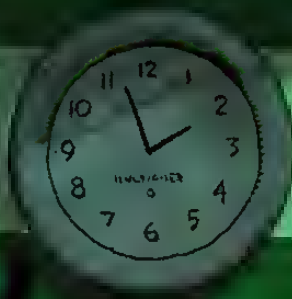
AMAZING HEROES

No. 131

December 15

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Editorial

I hate it when something I do accidentally causes someone pain or grief. What do you do? Apologize, beg forgiveness, but there's always: if I'd been more careful, more exacting, more... Guilt invented hindsight.

In Doc's Bookshelf in *AH* #128 a paragraph was unintentionally omitted. It was the one dealing with whether Superman was denounced by Nazi Joseph Goebbels. The missing paragraph, told us the *New Yorker* article Dwight had received from a professor was entitled "Why I Don't Believe In Superman," credited to an E.J. Kahn, Jr. Since a close quotation was also dropped, it seemed the article was part of the professor's letter.

You may think: No big deal, but you don't know Mr. Decker. He has such pride in his writing. He's called me the day he sent his manuscript to tell me, upon re-reading, there's something he'd like to make clearer. You should be glad to have him. I am. (My brother says Dwight's column is his second favorite thing in *AH* (I wonder what's the first?))

So why aren't there more letters

commenting on his columns? They're certainly insightful—I think his Dr. Wertham columns and this issue's should be mandatory reading for all comic readers). More importantly, Don Rosa has told me questions to his Information Center have been coming in drips and drabs. Is it true? Has the *Crisis* wiped minds of the treasures of comics *auld lang syne*? That's not all Dwight talks about by a long shot, but he often does reflect back.

So many letters complain about Spider-Man's costume, Batman's ears, and why John Byrne and Frank Miller don't do a *Snapper Carr* mini-series? Is everyone so entrenched in I-want-my-heroes-my-way? What happened to the interest in Golden Age comics? And artists?! A universal constant: things change. I think the way to handle change is to hold on to what's dear—neither smother it nor let it be lost to just memory.

I remember when Golden Age was the big business in comics. It's upsetting to see an issue of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cost more than a *Weird Fantasy*—that's like a Leroy Neiman

going for more than a Van Gogh. You can get good girl art in a Howard Chaykin book, so why bother with Matt Baker, right? (20 lashes for anyone who said "Who?")

I'm not trying to force you to try something new (something old?). You may swear by the "new" Superman, Batman, and not care there was an *X-Men* before Chris Claremont. But that doesn't mean those golden oldies weren't just as hot as anything today.

Don Rosa, Dwight Decker, many, many others, and hopefully myself, are just here to remind you—because we're holdin' on.

Bye to golden oldie lover, news correspondent Dave Hall. Take care.

KEVIN DOOLEY

NEXT ISSUE: *There's no earthquake, but things are Chaykin all over. In an interview conducted by Kim Thompson, Howard talks about his new Blackhawk, his new American Flagg! and all sorts of controversial stuff. Plus, a Blackhawk hero history, and even more stuff. A freeze-dried collector's item if there ever was one.*

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AD DEADLINES

(These have been messed up for a while—they're better now)

Amazing Heroes #134 (ships mid-January).....	December 15
Amazing Heroes #135 (ships late January).....	December 31
Amazing Heroes #136 (ships mid-February).....	January 15, 1988
Amazing Heroes #137 (ships late February).....	January 31, 1988

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Writing: Address all submissions to Editor, Amazing Heroes, 1800 Bridgegate Street, Suite 101, Westlake Village, CA 91361. Enclose an S.A.S.E. for return of your manuscript. Submissions must be typed, double-spaced. Keep a copy of your manuscript. Include your name, complete address, and phone number on the first page of each article.

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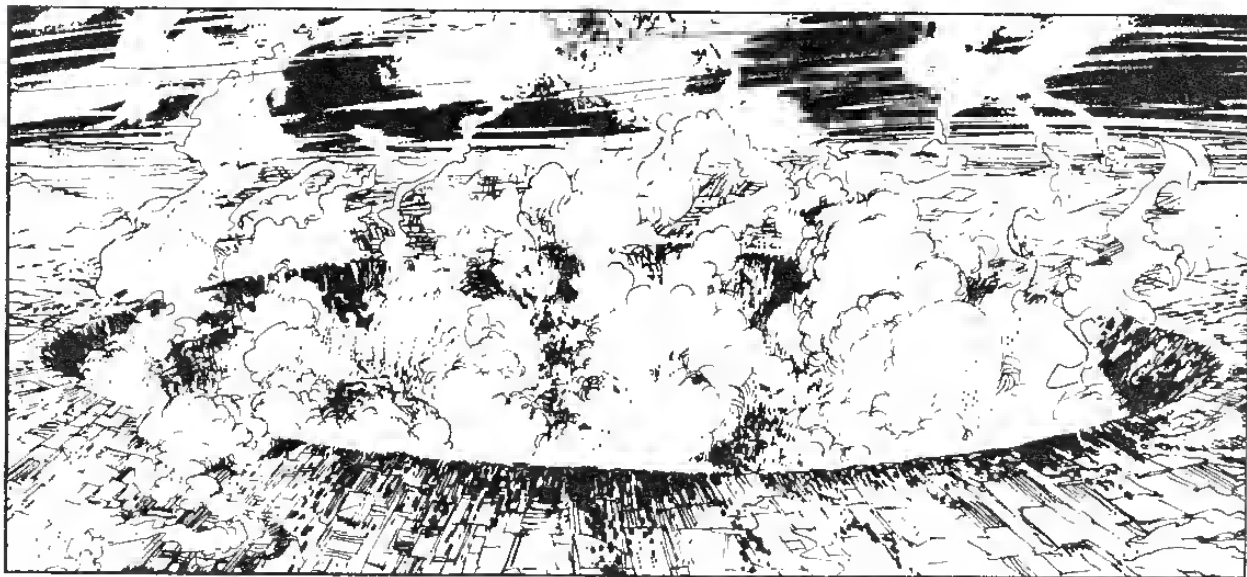
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NEWSLINE

MARVEL: LIFE IS THE PITT IN NEW, NEW UNIVERSE—PRICE HIKES!



Hole-y Pittsburg! The ramifications of the destruction of said city resonate throughout all of Marvel's New Universe titles.

Okay, Pittsburg is gone. Now What?

Well, it's only the beginning (not of more cities being destroyed...yet). There's lots of plot tie-in plans throughout the New Universe titles, such as: The President of the United States will start the draft again, which will be used to segregate paranormals into "relocation and training facilities" (which sound like the internment camps the Japanese were herded into during WWII). This will be seen in the special format (ala *The Pitt*) book called *The Draft*. Each of the respective New Universe titles will have their characters "rounded-up" by government agencies (*Psi-Force*, *D.P.7*, and *Justice* all numbered #21). There will be some protests against this new "draft" across America (in the books).

In *The Pitt*, Spitfire, late of *Spitfire and the Troubleshooters* and *Codename: Spitfire* will be sent by the government to investigate the big bang.

Libya is going to take credit for blowing up Pittsburg, which will heat up political fires that point toward inevitable global conflict.

What's more, the blast is going to affect the Earth's environment!

In specific titles: **Blur** of *D.P. 7* will be racing to what was once Pittsburg because some of his family were there. Of course the rest of the team will follow. This happens in issue #18.

Justice #20 will feature a "Pitt-aid"

concert that has been organized to help survivors.

However, most shocking of all will occur in *The Star Brand*. **Debbie Fix**, a.k.a. **Duck**, will give birth to **Ken Connell's** baby (in *TSB* #13)! Like Billy Mumy in the old *Twilight Zone* episode, it is not only intelligent from birth, but also wields the *Star Brand* power! And when this kid cries for Da-da, Da-da better answer! In the next issue (#14), Baby Brand eliminates all nuclear weapons! Later, of course Star Tot and dear ol' dad face off and pity the poor town beneath the conflagration.

And...well, Mommy, the U.S. declares war on Libya and who do you think they send into the fray? Well, we got these camps full of these paranormals...! There will be a third special edition (ala *The Pitt* and *The Draft*) that'll give us this boom-by-boom accounting of our downhill plummet to WWII—the war to end all...

Marvel has graciously decided to submit all of their own previews for the phenomenally gargantuan *Amazing Heroes Preview Special*—coming to your local comics shop within the next month. There is sure to be a lot more information therein.

One more thing about the New Universe: it's reality time, fellow collectors. All four titles will now be going direct sales only, they will changing formats to the kind on *The New Alien Legion* and *Video*. That

also means, you guessed it, a price increase to \$1.25 with all titles shipping in January 1988, those being: *Justice*, *Psi-Force*, and *D.P. 7* all numbered #19 and *The Star Brand* #13. (With #18, *The 'Nam* will also go direct only \$1.25. *The 'Nam* will also be reprinted in a *Savage Sword of Conan*-like magazine format next year.)

Can there possibly be any other news after this? Let's get back to the Marvel Universe where things are a little...calmer?

The bad news is: there are price increases here, too, kids. Nine titles are going to the big buck, \$1.00. Here they are, read 'em and listen to your wallet weep:

Three titles of the friendly neighborhood you-know-what: *Web Of Spider-Man* #38, *Spectacular Spider-Man* #138, *Amazing Spider-Man* #301 [NOTE: #300 of the latter is a double-sized issue selling for \$1.50], *The Avengers* #291, *Silver Surfer* #11, *Punisher* #8, and two mutant titles *The X-Men* #229 and *X-Factor* #28.

Are you okay? Take a deep breath before you go on.

Just some brief notes: BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH will, reportedly, be doing the cover and co-plotting to *Iron Man* #229...as he says in the interview this issue TODD McFARLANE will ink himself starting with *Amazing Spider-Man* #300. Major good stuff. Check it out. ●

ECLIPSE NEWS: FINAL A.R.B.B.H. HAS FOUR STORIES AND GALLERY

The final issue of *Adolescent Radio-active Black Belt Hamsters* (#9) will have 4 four-page stories. Within a framing sequence by regular artist and writer SAM KIETH and DON CHIN will be work by MARK (Gnatrat) MARTIN, CHUCK (Bullet Crow) FIALA, KEN (Clint) MEYER, JR., and special guest artist PARSONAVICH (the original artist on *ARBH*).

There will also be a gallery of "pin-ups by such talents as: MIKE DRINGENBERG, BRYAN ROBLES, KEVIN HARVILLE, HERB WOOD, TY TEMPLETON, RON LIM and SAM DE LA ROSA. The cover will be pencilled, inked, and colored by BRENT (Somerset Holmes, *Strike-force Morituri*) ANDERSON. All for \$2.00.

The back-up in ALAN MOORE and JOHN TOTLEBEN's *Miracle-man* #14, where we discover what happened between books II and III, is a post-holocaust tale by DOUG MOENCH and JIM SULLIVAN called "Nuclear Spring."

Zot's world goes a-p-e as the Deevolutionaries return in issue #16. It is a self-contained complete story with everything done by, of course, SCOTT MCCLOUD.

TOM YEATES does the cover to *Swords of Texas* #3.

The second flexidisc from 4Winds will be included in the sixth issue of *Prowler*. One side is "Hey! Mister Prowler" a booster song from WWII



That shark has pretty teeth, babe. A.R.B.B.H. face their final issue. Above panel is just symbolic.

by MICHAEL H. PRICE and the AMBROSE SISTERS. The "B" side is the theme of the new *Prowler* by TIM TRUMAN.

Alien Worlds goes semi-annual and starts again with #1. With six stories written by BRUCE JONES, art will be by ERIC SHANOWER, BILL WRAY, THOM ERIQUEZ, MIKE DRINGENBERG, BOB FINGER-

MAN, and RALPH REESE. It will be 48 pages, squarebound, and sell for \$3.95.

A tip of the welcome mat to Mr. Gung-Ho Sales Manager at Eclipse, STEVEN BEAU SCOTT SMITH, who is inundating us with press releases to keep us (and you) as up to date as possible with all the Eclipse information... fit to print.

NEWS FOR ETERNITY: EX-MUTANT/NEW HUMANS AND 8-PAGE PREVIEWS

In December Eternity re-distributes, under its own imprint, *Ex-Mutants* #6 and #1 of *New Humans*. Both are written by DAVID LAWRENCE, pencilled by RON LIM, and inked by TIM DZON. They start with new stories from then on. Speaking of the E-Ms, the new year will see *The Ex-Mutant Pin-Up Book* #1 containing 20 full-color double-page spreads by artists RON LIM, TIM DZON, and URIEL CATON, the new *Ex-Mutants* artists.

Also in December is BEN DUNN's *Ninja High School Graphic Novel*, accumulating all three issues of the mini-series (some reworked), a new cover and a new adventure, pin-ups, and other stuff.

A whole bunch of Eternity titles in January will feature 8-page previews, making them 40-page issues, but still sell at \$1.95. Some of the previews will of Eternity titles and some will be from Malibu Comics. Here's how the issues and previews roll out:

In *Ex-Mutants* #7: Eternity's



For the boys overseas: Ex-Mutant pin-ups

Retrograde #2 by GREGG KENDRICK and FRANK TURNER, and the first issue of Malibu's *Bloodwing* by BILL SPANGLER, JOHN GALLAGHER, and MICHAEL LAING.

In *New Mutants*: Evan Dorkin's

Pirate Corps from Eternity and Malibu's *The Rovers* by S.A. BENNETT, SCOTT BIESER, and MIKE ROBERTS.

In *Solo Ex-Mutants* #1—this new title starts with adventures of Erin alone: previewed is Eternity's new *Starlight* by C.J. HENDERSON, URIEL, and SCOTT HANNA and also issue #5—the first in the regular series—of R.A. JONES and BUTCH BURCHAM's *Dark Wolf*, which should hit the regular stands in February.

"The Saga Begins" is the title of the *Ex-Mutants Graphic Novel* Volume One, which in 96 pages reprints the first three issues of the *Ex-Mutants* as well as stuff from *Ex-Mutants Special Edition* #1 and will tote a full color wraparound cover by RON LIM and JIMMY PALMIOTTI, shipping in January it retails for \$5.95.

Finally, there will be a guest appearance by two members of the *New Humans* in *Ninja* #11 also shipping in January.

SPOTLIGHT ON ANIMATION

Fans of animation can look forward to February 1988 when *Korkis & Cawley's Cartoon Quarterly* will make its debut.

There'll be quite an impressive array of features and writers for the first issue:

- the many amor odors of Pepe Le Pew by CHUCK JONES himself...
- the innerworkings of Disney's new TV animation division...plus, a celebration of Mickey Mouse's 60th birthday...
- how Beany & Cecil became a BOB CLAMPETT cartoonoooooon...
- JIM DAVIS purrs about bringing his boy Garfield to the screen...
- changes in the Flintstones over the years by SCOTT SHAW!...
- an episode guide to the new Jonny Quest tv series...
- also...the new computer animated Captain Power...Superman in animation throughout his 50 years...

all the animated Oscar winners... New Zealand's new animated *Footrot Flats*...columns by a LEONARD MALTIN (from *Entertainment Tonight*) and WILL FINN (animator, writer and humorist)...and more.

There will be "plenty of art" according to the press release many "produced especially for" *Cartoon Quarterly*.

The two names before the title are



Has the modern stone-age family changed? Find out in *Cartoon Quarterly* #1.

JIM KORKIS, who is an animated historian (a historian on animation, not a historian who's animated), and JOHN CAWLEY, who has worked on such films as STEVEN SPIELBERG's *An American Tail*.

This will be magazine-sized, 48 pages, and will sell for \$2.50.

Spotlight publications also prints

Mighty Mouse, Underdog and Heckle and Jeckle comics. The first issue of the latter title will be coming out in December. It's full color with two stories one by JIM MAIN, writer, and GARY FIELDS, artist, and the second written by TIM CORRIGAN, with art by RAY DIRGO. The cover is by JIM ENGEL. ●

DC: SUPES & WW! NEW PHANTOM, OLD SPECTRE

BERICHTIGUNG! (CORRECTION!)



One of Jim Aparo's new covers for the collected Spectre with Michael Fleisher.

What's the longest running newspaper strip starring a costumed hero? The Phantom. He's over 50 years old (sorry Superman) and still written by creator LEE FALK. DC joins Gold Key, Harvey and Charlton (remember those great DON NEWTON issues?) in bringing the "Ghost That Walks" to the four-color pages. This 4-issue

series is written by PETER DAVID, pencilled by JOE ORLANDO, inked by DENNIS JANKE. #1's cover is by ORLANDO and DAVE GIBBONS.

The final issue (ere going weekly) of *Action Comics* (#600) will feature one of the most eagerly awaited stories of the year: *Superman and Wonder Woman*. The story is written by JOHN BYRNE, responsible for the "revitalization" of the Man of Steel and drawn by GEORGE PEREZ, responsible for... riiiiight. Other artists who will appear in this issue include KEVIN MAGUIRE (of *Justice League International*), MIKE MIGNOLA (of the *World of Krypton* mini-series), STEVE RUDE (of *Nexus* and *Space Ghost*), and CURT SWAN (of... *Superman*).

Those MICHAEL FLEISHER/JIM APARO Spectres that appeared in *Adventure Comics* #s 431-440 are going to be collected in a four-issue mini-series with new covers by Aparo. The final issue will contain stories the Aparo has recently drawn from scripts Fleisher wrote back then. The series will sell for \$2.50 each.

DC has cancelled *Teen Titans Spotlight* with #21. ●

In the article about Starblaze/Donning in *Amazing Heroes* #127, it was mentioned that S/D would be doing a color collection the Harlan Ellison and Richard Corben *Vic & Blood: The Chronicles of a Boy and His Dog* two issue mini-series.

This ain't true!

According to George W. Beahm, Director of Marketing at The Donning Company, *there are no arrangements at all with Mad Dog to do a compilation.*

Jan Strnad, of Mad Dog Graphics, wrote to say "No such book is scheduled and we have no contractual obligation to Donning whatsoever on this property."

So, in other words, as far as it stands now, the two black-and-white issues from Mad Dog Graphics are the only ones available. Please contact your friendly neighborhood comic book shop, or tother source, if you wanna get them.

Having printed the information thinking it was, indeed, correct, AH apologizes if this caused any problems for Harlan, Richard, the people at Mad Dog or the people at Starblaze.

Kevin Dooley, Editor

IN SPACE NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU RIDE A DARK HORSE



Mark Nelson considers the *Aliens* mini-series his "dream book." His "detailed, atmospheric rendition of the characters" is why Dark Horse chose him and why 20th Century Fox chose Dark Horse.

In cooperation with Twentieth Century Fox, Dark Horse will be releasing an *Aliens* comic book. It will be a six-issue bi-monthly black-and-white mini-series.

The writer for the series is MARK VERHEIDEN, who does *The American*, also from Dark Horse. According to the press release, Chris says he's going for "A *Swamp Thing* kind of creepiness," promising that if you liked the intensity and horror of the two films, you'll like the series.

On the art chores (read: pleasures) will be MARK A. NELSON, who has done the "Tales of the Clonezone" back-ups in *Nexus* with MIKE BARON, so he's no stranger to drawing alien-types.

The Dark Horse series will take place quite a bit after the *Aliens* movie's happenings. That way they don't have to worry about conflicting with the *second sequel*! But the question on everyone's lips is: will Sigourney Weaver once again reprise her role as Ripley?

The six issues from Dark Horse are on the schedule to begin release next year, around April, and if successful, there has been talk about it becoming a regular series, as well as discussion about a possible adaptation of said third film.

In other Dark Horse/MARK VERHEIDEN news, the aforementioned book *The American* that Mark does with artist CHRIS WARNER, has been optioned by Group W Communications for a live-action tv series. More info as it comes in. ●

BORIS THE PUBLISHER: CAST STILL INTACT

There's yet another new publisher on the scene: Nicotat. You may think this is just another independent publisher, but how do you explain their having *Boris the Bear*, late of Dark Horse? Simple when you know Nicotat is owned by said ursine creator, JAMES DEAN SMITH.

Boris's format remains the same. Smith will continue on both the pencils and inks, plots and co-scripting with STEVE MATSSON, who will color all covers and act as production manager. JOHN WORKMAN will letter, and the new promotions manager will be some guy named ANDY MANGELS, who's written some articles for that Eagle-award winning publication, *Amazing Heroes*. [Congrats, Andy.—KD]

All of the cast favorites are intact: Margaret, Rufus, Peter, Steve, David, Butch and the Infernos, the Skate-

board Kids, etc.; the only absentees are Mrs. Abbot and Wacky Squirrel.

Here's what's comin' up for Boris and the gang:

Following #13's Punish-Bear episode, with Boris battling pushers, we'll see what happens #2, a mad pencil, rubs him the wrong way; in issue #14 Boris deals with probably his greatest foe: a typical day; an oooscarey adventure in #16; and with #17 a three-parter, with lots of guest stars and the introduction of *Whip Lash*—a Sledgehammer-type.

Future possibilities for Nicotat, which is an Indian name meaning "seaside," includes *Pooky* and *Whip Lash* Specials; a *Boris* Annual or Graphic Novel; and maybe, if sales warrant it, going to color after issue #24? Who knows? There are grizzlier fates. ●

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TOP OF THE NEWS

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Page Nine © 1987 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc.

Valkyrie! Volume Christmas Must

Dixon and Gulacy Sell-Out Mini-Series To Be Collected

One more item on every comic collector's Christmas wish list will be *Valkyrie! Prisoner of the Past*, a single 72-page squarebound volume bringing together all three issues of Chuck Dixon, Paul Gulacy, and Willie Blyberg's smash mini-series.

"*Valkyrie!* was a huge sell-out across the country," says publisher Dean Mullaney. "Fans in Dallas, Chicago, and San Diego (sites of the summer's biggest conventions) were begging us for copies, and there just wasn't anything we could do. Retailers underordered, we printed from those orders, and the book was grabbed off the racks. Maybe this compilation volume will help make it up to frustrated fans."

Cat Yronwode, who edited the series, says the story "represents a major turning point in Valkyrie's life. The three episodes—'Exposure,' 'Capture,' and 'Trial'—are a serious reminder that we can never escape from our pasts. The best we can do is change, and hope others will forgive our mistakes."

The serious political underpinnings of the tale, which focuses on Valkyrie's Nazi past and her trial in the Soviet Union for war crimes, led to its being considered a landmark story in the career of writer Chuck Dixon.

Paul Gulacy will provide a new painted cover for the edition, which ships December 1 and retails for \$6.95.



Art © 1987 Paul Gulacy and Willie Blyberg

Eclipse Comics
Shipping October 6, 1987

Airboy #31
Kamui #10
California Girls #5
The Dreamery #6
Scout #24

Revised Ship Dates
The Liberty Project #5 10/13
Crossfire #25 10/13
ARBB Hamsters #8 10/27
3-D Three Stooges #3 10/27
Axa #2 11/3

To Be Announced
Espers #6
Enchanter #4
Prison Ship #1
Detectives, Inc. #3
Milton Caniff's America



Art © 1987 Ty Templeton

Hamsters #9 Ends Hit Series

Every ARBBH Artist Will Be Represented

Brent Anderson, popular artist of such series as *Somerset Holmes*, *Strikeforce Morituri*, and *The X-Men*, will contribute a special "tribute" cover to *Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters #9*, the series' final issue.

Anderson, praised by many for his cinematic storytelling technique and outstanding painted and drawn covers, will pencil, ink, and color the piece.

"I'm very pleased to have someone of Brent's talent doing the cover to our last issue," said ARBBH writer/creator Don Chin. "This issue will be the icing on the

cake for what I think will be our best issue ever!"

Eclipse Comics and Chin have planned a gala showcase of artists for the issue, "so the Hamsters can go out with a bang," according to Chin.

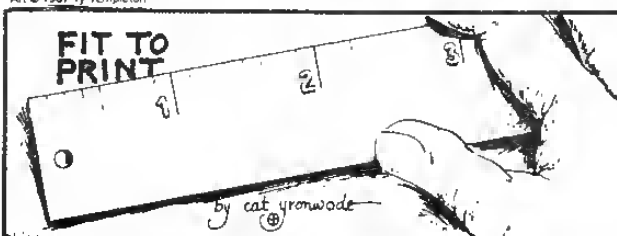
The book will feature four short stories with work by Mark Martin (*Gnatrat*), Chuck Fiala (*Bullet Crow*), Ken Meyer Jr. (*Chin*), and the original Hamster artist, Parsonovich. Sam Keith and Chin will provide the issue with a framing sequence.

ARBBH #9 will also have a large pin-up section in back, with artwork by Ron Lim (*Badger*, *Psi-Force*) and Sam de la Rosa, Herb Wood, Bryan Robles, Mike (*Enchanter*) Dringenberg, and Ty Templeton, of *Critters* and *Stig's Inferno* fame.

"This is really going to be a fun issue, featuring plenty of work by the folks that made the first four famous," says Chin.

When asked if this would be the last appearance of Bruce, Chuck, Jackie, and Clint, Chin smiled and said, "Maybe.

"Maybe not."



THIS IS FIT TO PRINT NO. 180:

Walnut bread crumbs in the keyboard, courtesy of Miyako Graham's baking talent and my fumble-fingered eagerness to break off a hunk. Oh, good. The longer I type, the more of them fall between the keys. Great, now they're all hidden inside the works and nobody will ever know they were there.

IN BRIEF: Having no earth-shaking messages to divest myself of on this cool sunny morning, and knowing that all around this column there'll be plenty of hot news, courtesy of Fred Burke's journalistic talent, I think I'll just mention the little bits, the news-crums that might otherwise fall through the cracks between the keys.

OOOPS: Yesterday we got in our office copies of the reprint of Reid Fleming, *World's Toughest Milkman* Vol. 2 No. 2. It's the one with a cover illo of Reid at a cafe counter, a knife protruding from his back. Sez "No. 2" right up there in the cover box. Trouble is, when you open it up, down in the indicia, where it SHOULD say "Vol. 2 No. 2, Second Printing, September, 1987" it reads "Vol. 2 No. 3, August, 1987."

A minor mess-up, perhaps, but it is going to confuse a whole lot of people, and it makes me sick when these things happen. Think of what Bob Overstreet will say!

Seems like Sean, who typesets the indicia, substituted the one for the as-yet-uncompleted Vol. 2 No. 3 (which was supposed to run in August, but which seems to have slipped between the cracks in creator David Boswell's life and will be resolicited when he gets it together), or perhaps the printers, who get the inside front cover type in a big pile so they can run the covers ahead of time, slipped up and used the wrong one.

We may never know what happened (and it's not as if assigning blame here is on the level of a Nazi war crimes trial), but I'm unhappy

nevertheless, because thousands and thousands of people are gonna look at this reprint issue and not know if they have an issue 3 or a second printing of issue 2. Crap.

OPERA UPDATE: It's hardly time to put out a full-fledged news release on this, but Craig Russell fans may want to know that Craig has changed his mind about the next opera adaptation comic he'll be doing for Eclipse. Originally it was gonna be *Ariane and Bluebeard*, a rather obscure piece with music by the guy who wrote *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but somehow commercial instincts got the better of him (that's a joke, son) and he has decided to do *The Magic Flute* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Look for it when it's ready, sometime next year.

Which reminds me, here's where I should mention that Sean Deming (he of the possible culpability in indicia-land) is currently starring as Mozart in a Santa Rosa production of *Amadeus*. Doing a pretty good job of it too, to judge from the reviews.

BULGING: As soon as I get off this computer terminal, I'm gonna go organize an expedition into the fabled Eclipse Warehouse Space. Seems like it is all full. Our barn is also full of books. No more room. Can't rent any more space unless we go to an outfit that's about twenty miles away. Gotta ditch some of these excess books.

What I'm leading up to is the news that we're gonna be holding some kinda gigantic warehouse clearance sale really soon. It won't be anything on the order of a big distributor's inventory sale, but the prices may be lower. Only certain material will be on sale, and we'll be setting some kind of minimum order with freight to be paid by the buyer. Look for an ad in the next couple of weeks; it'll be running in all our books and in many of the trade papers. The sale will be open to distributors, retailers and collectors, as long as the merchandise holds out. You'll enjoy it.

Heading this time by **JIM BERTRAM**. To see YOUR name in boldface type and your art or lettering here, make FiP logos 8 1/2 inches wide by 3 inches deep and send 'em to

catherine yronwode, p.o. box 1099, forestville, calif. 95436

Skywolf and Riot Walk Down Aisle

Dan Spigle To Illustrate 'Wedding Of The Decade'

Popular *Crossfire* and *Blackhawks* artist Dan Spigle will be taking the helm of the Skywolf back-up series in *Airboy* #34-37, and for the occasion, writer Chuck Dixon has fashioned the wedding of the decade—the decade being the 1950s.

In issue #36, Skywolf and Riot O'Hara will finally tie the knot in a wedding ceremony full of special cameo appearances. Among the guest stars will be Sgt. Strike (who plays a major role in issue #35), Skinny McGinty, The Bald Eagle, The Fighting Devil Dogs from *Protuber*, and a host of other aviation heroes.

"Cat (Yronwode) proposed the idea, and at first I was reluctant," recalls writer Chuck Dixon. "But she's very persuasive, and I feel that the four stories involving the marriage are the strongest ones in the series to date."

Of course, regular *Airboy* readers know that by the 1980s, Skywolf is a confirmed bachelor. "Obviously, since Sky isn't married now and he was married then, something is going to happen," says Yronwode. "We guarantee that no supervillain is going to shove Riot off a bridge. Sad commentary on comics today that we have to add that footnote. On the other hand," she laughs, "we might be lying."

The four-part wedding story is no lie, however. "Basically, Sky and Riot have their backs up against the wall once again during the closing days of the Korean conflict," says Dixon. "After encounters with the Chinese army, Sgt. Strike, and impending nuclear devastation, Sky proposes to Riot. This is followed by a bachelor party with cameos by just about every male *Airfighter*—plus lots of surprises. There's plenty of action," assures Dixon, "even though it's a romance story."

The emotional intensity is tailored to the work of artist Spigle, who previously illustrated two Skywolf stories in *Airboy*, including the first love scene between Riot and Skywolf. "I love working with Dan," says Dixon. "I feel a lot of freedom, and I can write to his strengths—which are many."

Airboy is a monthly, full-color, Baxter series retailing for \$1.75. The lead stories continue to feature the regular art team of Stan Woch and Willie Blyberg. Issue #34 ships December 1.

Dec. 1-15

COMING

DISTRACTIONS!

AARDVARK ONE INTERNATIONAL

☐ PUMA BLUES #14

Story.....Steven Murphy
Art.....Michael Zulli
[\$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

☐ CEREBUS #105

Story/Art.....Dave Sim
[\$1.70 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

ADVENTURER PUBLICATIONS



☐ ADVENTURERS BOOK II #2

The heroes search for the Grail of Darkness in the Angora jungle. Back-up by Brian Guice.

Story.....Scott Behnke
Art.....Kent Burles
Cover.....Peter Hsu
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ NINJA ELITE #5

The heroes search for the 1st Key of Telku in the Temple of Baal.

Story.....Mark Ellis
Art.....Gabrielle Morrisette
Cover.....Steve Hickman
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ STAR RANGERS #2

The heroes search...that is, they seize a shipload of illegal weapons. Two back-up pages by Peter Hsu.

Story.....Mark Ellis
Art.....Jim Mooney
Cover.....Dave Dorman
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ WARRIORS #2

Anthology title, stories from the Adventurers' continuity.

Story/Art.....Various
Cover.....Peter Hsu
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

AMERICOMICS

☐ THE ARMAGEDDON FACTOR #1 (of 3)

Just about every hero in the AC universe face a crisis on their Earth.

Story/Pencils.....Rik Levins
Inks.....Dan Davis
Cover.....Bill Black
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ DRAGONFLY #8

Nancy Arazello and Dragonfly are dead. Or...?

Art.....Rik Levins
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]



☐ FANTASY FEATURES #3

"The High and the Mighty!"

An all-splash-panel fight with a dragon.
Art.....Deil Barras
[\$2.50 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ FEMFORCE #10

"A Day in the Life of a Jungle Girl!"
"Camilla" back-up by Matt Baker.

Story/Art.....Bill Black
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

ARCHIE COMICS

75+ titles shipping this month: Betty & Veronica #9, Betty's Diary #16, Jughead #5, Laugh #6, New Archies #4.

BLACKTHORNE

☐ BATTLE FORCE #2 (of 3)

Double cross! Deceit! the heroes are considered "expendable!"

Story.....Jack Herman
Art.....Stan Timmons
[\$1.75 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ BATTLETECH #3

Game tie-in.

Story.....Joe Judt
Art.....Worley & J. Nelson
[\$1.75 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ BRAVESTAR IN 3-D #2

"A Boy and His Horse." BraveStarr meets...the Equestroid!

Story.....John Stephenson
Art.....Adrian Moro
[\$2.50 3-D comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ CALIFORNIA RAISINS IN 3-D #1

From off your TV screens. Remember where you heard it!

Story.....Weissworks
Art.....Andy Ice, Jeff Marghart, Chris Miller & David Cody Weiss
[\$2.50 3-D comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ CROW OF THE BEARCLAN #6

Climax to the Bear-Lizard war.

Story.....Ed Luena
Art.....Ken Hooper
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ DICK TRACY MONTHLY #24

Double-crossing jewel thieves are on their fence's hit list!"

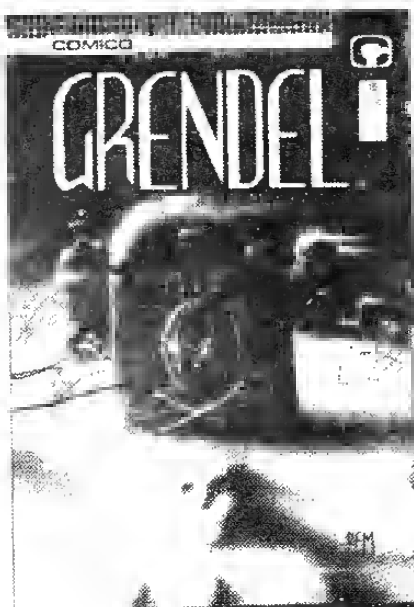
Story/Art.....Chester Gould
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

- ☐ **DICK TRACY MONTHLY #25**
Tracy's daughter is kidnapped.
Story/Art..... **Chester Gould**
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **GUMBY IN 3-D #6**
Into the Valley of the Dinosaurs; later, sheriff Gumby fights a gunslinger.
Story/Art..... **David Cody Weiss**
[\$2.50 3-D comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **THE OFFICIAL HOW TO DRAW G.I. JOE #1**
What it says.
Art..... **Dennis Francis**
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **OFFICIAL HOW TO DRAW ROBOTECH #11**
Drawing Resistance fighter and Yellow Dancer.
Art..... **Francis & R. Miller**
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **OFFICIAL HOW TO DRAW TRANSFORMERS #2**
Predaking.
Art..... **Francis & R. Miller**
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **RICHIE RICH AND CASPER IN 3-D #1**
Heroes team up to fight Dr. Franken-spook. Thank goodness. Reprints old Harvey stuff. Art possibly **Ernie Colon**.
[\$2.50 3-D comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **ROACHMILL #7**
"The Rooftop Raider, Part 2."
Story..... **Rich Hedden**
Art..... **Tom McWeeney**
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

B-MOVIE COMICS

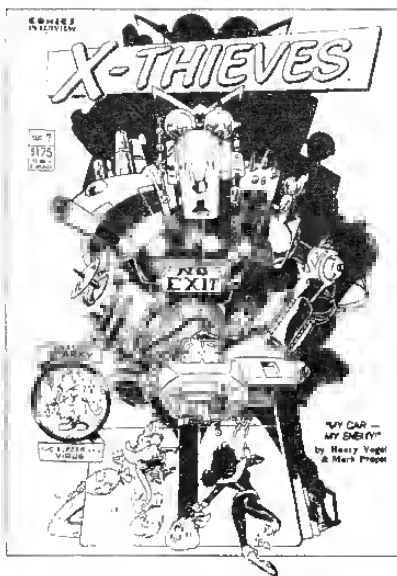
- ☐ **B-MOVIE COMICS SAMPLER**
Four issues of various B-Movie comics.
Story..... **Various**
Art..... **Various**
[\$2.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **THE FLAME #2**
Story..... **Wally Stoelting**
Art..... **Lamport & Holwczynski**
[95¢ black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

COMICO



- ☐ **GRENDEL #15**
Brian Li Sung races with the Devil.
Story..... **Matt Wagner**
Art..... **Bernie Mireault**
Cover..... **Mireault & Steacy**
[\$1.50 color comic; parental guidance; ships 12/4]
- ☐ **JUSTICE MACHINE #12**
TV sets are used as dangerous weapons. Back up by **Markalan Joplin, Mike Gustovich** and **Aubrey Bradford**.
Story..... **Bob Ingersol**
Art..... **Simpson & Gustovich**
[\$1.50 color comic; ships 12/4]
- ☐ **ROBOTECH, THE NEW GENERATION #20**
"Birthday Blues." Cast tries to raise birthday girl's spirits.
Story..... **Markalan Joplin**
Art..... **Byers & Rankin**
[\$1.50 color comic; ships 12/4]

COMICS INTERVIEW



- ☐ **ARISTOCRATIC XTRATERR-ESTRIAL TIME-TRAVELING THIEVES #7**
The FredMobile has an electrical virus. Also, a life-and-death struggle.
Story..... **Henry Vogel**
Art..... **Mark Propst**
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **MICRA GRAPHIC NOVEL**
The first three issues of the comics, plus some new background material.
Story..... **Lamar Waldron**
Art..... **Ted Boothanakit**
[\$4.95 black-and-white graphic novel; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **ORIGINS OF THE SOUTHERN KNIGHTS**
Collects the origins of Electrode, Connie Ronnin, Kristin and Dragon. Plus some new material.
Story/Art..... **Henry Vogel**
[\$4.95 black-and-white graphic novel; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SOUTHERN KNIGHTS #25**
All the main characters guest-star (huh?).
Story..... **Henry Vogel**
Art..... **Willie Peppers**
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

CRYSTAL COMICS

- ☐ **DEATH'S HEAD #1**
After the world has been mostly destroyed, the survivors are concentrated in a megalopolis south of Jersey.
Story..... **Jack Herman**
Art..... **Vokes & Rankin**
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]



- ☐ **EAGLE #12**
Origin issue with pin-ups, including the Acacia pin-up from our swimsuit issue.
Story..... **Jack Herman**
Art..... **Vokes & Rankin**
[\$2.50; 48-pages; black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SKROG SPECIAL #1**
Reprinting *Skrog* #1 and with the never-before seen *Skrog* #2.
Story..... **Bill Cucinotta**
Art..... **Cucinotta & Anderson**
Cover..... **Cucinotta & Wagner**
[\$2.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

C & T GRAPHICS

- ☐ **THE BATHING MACHINE #3**
More adventures for the rock n' roll band.
Story/Art..... **Ted Bolman**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **THE DIGGERS #1**
Archaeology students gain incredible powers after discovering something older than time...or newweek.
Story..... **Steve Keeter**
Art..... **Tim Corrigan**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **FEAR IS HELL #1**
Text stories, with some illustrations.
Story/Art..... **Corrigan, Shea, Perozich**
[\$1.50 black-and-white magazine; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **MIGHTYGUY #5**
MG vs. Maintenance Man. Also, Captain Cucumber.
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

DARK HORSE COMICS

COMING DISTRACTIONS

□ THE AMERICAN #4

The secret revealed!

Story.....Mark Verheiden
Art.....Warner & Nichols
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]



□ DARK HORSE PRESENTS #14

Masque by Mark Badger, Concrete by Paul Chadwick, and Mr. Monster by Michael T. Gilbert; the latter two characters and artists will appear on the cover of the *Amazing Heroes Preview Special*—Reserve Yours NOW!
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ INSANE #1

X-tra Men, Clodzilla. By Mike Richardson, Jim Bradrick, Dave Schwartz and others.
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ MECHA #4

Two Mechas duke it out in 'Frisko, while the Soviets make their move in the South Pacific.

Story.....Randy Stradley

Art.....Fong & Nichols
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

□ MR. MONSTER #1

The true origin of Mr. Monster.

Story/Art.....Michael T. Gilbert
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ WACKY SQUIRREL CHRISTMAS SPECIAL #2

Story.....Mike Richardson
Art.....Jim Bradrick
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

DC COMICS

□ BATMAN #418

"Ten Nights of the Beast" (Part 2 of 4) The Russian KGBest (no relation to the CIA) continues its rampage.

Story.....Jim Starlin
Art.....Aparo & DeCarlo
Cover.....Mike Zeck
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 1/7]

□ BLUE BEETLE #23

Madmen always return.

Story.....Len Wein
Art.....Andru & Bulanadi
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 1/7]

□ CHECKMATE #1

An anti-terrorist "ultra-secret organization" so secret that they don't even know about themselves.

Story.....Paul Kupperberg
Art.....Erwin & Vey
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ CINDER & ASHE #2 (of 4)

Viet Nam flashbacks resurge dark feelings.

Story.....Gerry Conway
Art/Cover.....Jose Luis Garcia Lopez
[\$1.75 color comic; mature; ships 12/8]

□ FIRESTORM, THE NUCLEAR MAN #69

Russian super-agent tracks Ronnie; new Russian teen super-hero team operating outside the sanctions of the "evil empire."

Story.....John Ostrander
Art.....Birch (John?) & La Rosa
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ FLASH #11

Flash isn't trapped in this place, he's trapped in "the other place."

Story.....Mike Baron
Art.....Guice & Mahlstedt
Cover.....Steve Lightle
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]



□ FOREVER PEOPLE #3 (of 6)

The Dark's secrets are brought to light.

Story.....J.M. DeMattels
Art.....Cullins & Kesel
[\$1.25 color comic; ships 12/15]

□ GREEN ARROW #3

GA's got "the most dangerous weapon of all time"—radioactive mint copies of *Brother Power, the Geek*.

Story/Cover.....Mike Grell
Art.....Hannigan & Giordano
[\$1.00 color comic; mature; ships 12/15]

□ HELLBLAZER #4

A religious cult kidnaps Constantine's niece and demands their own tv show.

Story.....Jamie Defano
Art.....John Ridgway
Cover.....Dave McKean
[\$1.25 color comic; mature; ships 12/15]

□ JUSTICE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL #12

The face of the JLI undergoes plastic surgery. Thanks to Maxwell Lord.

Story.....Giffen & DeMattels

Art.....Maguire & Gordon
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #45

Science vs. superstition (as always) in this 64-page 30th anniversary issue!

Story.....Paul Levitz
Art.....Cockrum, Giffen, Grell, LaRoque, Schaffenberg, Swan & DeCarlo, Giordano
Cover.....Ken Steacy
[\$2.95 color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 1/7]

□ 'MAZING MAN SPECIAL #2

Neat 'ories, neat 'rtwork. It's 'bout time 'Maze came back.

Story.....Bob Rozakls
Pencils.....Steven DeStefano
Inks.....Leialoha, Kesel, Robbins, & Boldman
[\$2.00 color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]



□ OUTCASTS #7 (of 12)

When you die "Live on the Freak Show" there's no reruns.

Story.....Wagner & Grant
Art.....Kennedy & Montano
[\$1.75 color comic; ships 12/8]

□ THE SAGA OF RA'S AL GHUL #4 (of 4)

Reprinting *Batman* #244, *Batman* #245, and *Detective* #410. New Adams wrap-around cover.

Story.....Denny O'Neil
Art.....Adams & Giordano
[\$2.50 deluxe format; ships 12/8]

□ SECRET ORIGINS #24

In a 30th anniversary celebration a retelling of the origin of the Legion of Super-Heroes by Levits & Stasi; the Golden Age Atom's origin is the back-up by R. Thomas, Clark & Alcalá.

Cover.....Swan & Anderson
[\$1.25 color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 1/7]

□ SILVERBLADE #8 (of 12)

More of how an actor could gain awesome powers without being President.

Story.....Cary Bates
Art.....Colan & Mitchell
[\$1.25 color comic; ships 12/15]

□ SGT. ROCK #421

Sarge Rock and sister Amy Rock free

brother Larry Rock and their pet...
Story.....Robert Kanigher
Art.....Sam Glanzman
Cover.....Joe Kubert
 [\$1.00 color comic; ships 12/15]

□ **STAR TREK #49**
 Convincing the Klingons the starship that attacked them is a renegade.
Story.....Peter David
Art.....Sutton & Villagran
 [75¢ color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 1/7]

□ **SUPERMAN #16**
 Kids, practical jokes don't hurt people; people hurt people.
Story.....John Byrne
Art.....Byrne & Kesel
 [75¢ color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 1/7]

□ **TALES OF THE TEEN TITANS #87**
 NTT #28—the Brother Blood showdown.
Story.....Marv Wolfman
Art.....Barreto & Tanghal
 [\$1.00 color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **WONDER WOMAN #15**
 When the Silver Swan dances it's Diana's swan song and it ain't Swani River.
Story.....Perez & Wein
Art.....Perez & Patterson
 [75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **WORLD OF SMALLVILLE #1 (of 4)**
 The unusual courtship of Jonathan and Martha Kent.
Story/Cover.....John Byrne
Art.....Schaffenberger & Alcalá
 [75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **YOUNG ALL-STARS #11**
 How Arn was born two years after his dad died—necrophilia notwithstanding.
Story.....Thomas & Thomas
Art.....Murray & M. Jones
 [\$1.25 color comic; ships 12/15]

ECLIPSE COMICS

□ **ADOLESCENT RADIOACTIVE BLACK BELT HAMSTERS #9**
 Final issue jam with 5 4-page stories featuring almost every talent who's ever been on ARBBH: Don Chin, Sam Kieth, Parsonovich, Herb Wood, Ken Meyer, Jr., Mike Dringenberg, Kevin Harville, Bryan Robles, Chuck Flala, and Ron Lim. (And that's just on the first story!)
 [\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **AIRBOY #34**
 "Barbed Wire Noose"
 A journey to a troubled land. In the Skywolf back-up: a secret the Chinese would kill for.
Stories.....Chuck Dixon
Art.....Woch & Blyberg
 [\$1.25 comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

□ **AREA 88 #14**
 Will Area 88 sweep away the Wolf Pack under the command of Hoover?
Story/Art.....Kaoru Shintani
 [\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **DREAMERY #7**
 "Alice in Wonderland" by Lela Dowling concludes; Stinz, the centaur, returns in "The Last Horselaugh" by Donna Barr; and "Lord of the Forest"—a Chinese folk

tale—adapted by Monika Livingston.
 [\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]



□ **KAMUI #14**
 "The Sword Wind," Kamui's second book, begins. Klan war is Kamui's klan destiny.
 [\$1.50 black-and-white comic; mature; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

□ **THE LIBERTY PROJECT #7**
 "Smooth Sailing"
 A super-powered vigilante is out to kill Johnny Savage.
Story.....Kurt Busiek
Art.....Fry & Hazelwood
 [\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

□ **MAI, THE PSYCHIC GIRL #14**
 Mai joy at finding out her father is alive is overshadowed by Garten's wanting to capture her.
Story.....Kazuya Kudo
Art.....Ryolchi Ikegami
 [\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **NEW AMERICA #2 (of 4)**
 A cool mission in Alaska: make Russia and Canada bitter enemies.
Story.....Yale & Ostrander
Art.....Kwapsz & Bradford
 [\$1.50 color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

□ **STRIKE! #5**
 Dennis must get the alien "Bugs!" out and in the Golden-Age back-up Sgt. Strike combats Nazi cavemen.
Stories.....Chuck Dixon
Art.....Tom Lyle/Romeo Tanghal
 [\$1.75 color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **VALKYRIE! COLLECTION**
 The compilation of the mini-series starring the sexiest female character from Airboy. New painted cover by Paul Gulacy.
Story.....Chuck Dixon
Art.....Gulacy & Blyberg
 [\$6.95 color comic; ships 12/1]

□ **WALK KELLY'S CHRISTMAS CLASSICS #1**
 Two of Kelly's most beloved (didn't you always want to produce something that

would be "beloved") stories with Santa.
Story/Art.....Watt Kelly
Painted Cover.....Steve Leialoha
 [\$1.75 color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **XENON #1**
 Xenon—a powerful cyborg or high school senior? He's two, two, two persons in one.
Story/Art.....Masaomi Kanzaki
 [\$1.50 color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

ENTROPY ENTERPRISES

□ **TALES FROM THE HEART #3**
 More Peace Corps tales.
Story.....Goff & Nieves
Art.....Seitu Hayden
 [\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

ETERNITY COMICS

□ **BORDERGUARD #2**
 Alien threats, weapons built and stock-piled, endless nightmares.
Story.....Peter Palmer
Art.....Henderson, Val, Hanna
 [\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **NINJA HIGH SCHOOL GRAPHIC NOVEL**
 The first three issues, reworked. Plus new material
Story/Art.....Ben Dunn
 [\$5.95 black-and-white; ships in Dec.]

□ **PIRATE CORPS #5**
 Having lost their ship and being broke, the crew are reduced to working at a McDonald's.
Story/Art.....Evan Dorkin
 [\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **SCARLET IN GASLIGHT #2**
 Sherlock Holmes and Van Helsing join against Dracula.
Story.....Martin Powell
Art.....Seppo Mukinen
 [\$1.95 black-and-white comic; mature; ships in Dec.]

□ **SHANGHAIED: THE SAGA OF THE BLACK KITE #5**
 Arkaen's social structure is threatened by Don Diego's alliance with Vidan. Revenge at any cost.
Story.....Tony Hutz
Art.....Helmert & Raush
 [\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **THE VERDICT #1**
 The Verdict seeks revenge for the murder of his daughter.
Story.....Martin Powell
Art.....Dean Haspiel
Cover.....Howard Chaykin
 [\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

FIRST COMICS

□ **AMERICAN FLAGG!: Southern Comfort Hardcover Ltd Edition**
Story/Art.....Howard Chaykin
 [\$35.95 album; ships 12/1]

□ **THE BADGER #34**
 A whored of biker demons (part 1 of 2).
Story.....Mike Baron

COMING DISTRACTIONS

Art. Lim & Geldhof
Cover. Zeck & Beatty
[\$1.75 color comic; ships 11/25]

GRIMJACK #45

Okay, who left the Demon Gate open?
Story. John Ostrander
Art. Tom Mandrake
[\$1.75 color comic; ships 12/4]

LONE WOLF & CUB #8

There's betrayal at a "Dead End."
Story. Kazuo Koike
Art. Goseki Kojima
Cover/Intro. Frank Miller
[\$2.50 black-and-white comic; mature; ships 11/25]

□ **MUNDEN'S BAR ANNUAL #1**
3 old and 3 new tales within the confines of the saloon from *Grimjack*. Talents include: **Matt Feazell** (bringing in *Anti-socialman*), **Steve Moncuse** stages a *Fish Police* raid, **John Ostrander**, **Del Close**, **Joe Staton**, **Brian Bolland**, **Jerry Ordway** (who did the cover), and **Mike Baron & Steve Rude**.
[\$2.95 color comic; ships 12/11; newsstand o/s 1/3]

□ **NEXUS #43**
To paint a "Portrait of Death" requires blood on the palette.
Story. Mike Baron
Art. Paul Smith
[\$1.75 color comic; ships 11/25]



□ **PSYCHOBlast #6**
What do you do when your inner mind wants to "Psyche Out"?
Story. Steven Grant
Art. Phipps & Vey
[\$1.75 color comic; ships 12/4]

□ **WHISPER #12**
Making a list, checking it twice, gonna find out who to cut and slice, a psychotic killer is coming to town.
Story. Steven Grant
Art. Rich Larsen
Cover. Bill Sienkiewicz
[\$1.75 color comic; ships 12/4]

FISHWRAP PRODUCTIONS

□ **FISH POLICE #11**

"Underground, Part 2."
Story/Art. Steve Moncuse
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

GLADSTONE COMICS

□ **MICKEY MOUSE #236**
"Pluto the Racer" (part 2) and Sunday page sequence by **Floyd Gottfredson**. Cover by **Daan Jippes**.
[95¢ color comic; ships 12/15; newsstand o/s 12/9]

HERO COMICS

□ **CHAMPIONS #6**
Mechanon is the menace.
Story. Dennis Mallonnee
Art. Marrinan & Barras
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **ETERNITY SMITH #6**
Science fiction horror in Antarctica; humanity at threat. Film at eleven.
Story. Dennis Mallonnee
Art. Hoberg & McCellan
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **THE MARKSMAN #2**
Marksman's origin, part 2. Back up by **Dennis Mallonnee**, **Walt Davis** and **Dell Barras**.
Story. Steve Perrin
Art. McDonnell & Janes
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

JABBERWOCKY GRAPHIX

□ **GOODIES #43**
With stuff by **Brad Foster**, **Jim Thompson**, **Lee Burks**, **R.C. Harvey**, and **Mike Roberts**.
[\$2.00 black-and-white mini-comic; mature; ships in Dec.]



KITCHEN SINK PRESS

□ **SPIRIT #38**
"Amulet of Osiris," "The Coin," "Two Lives," and "The Christmas Spirit of 1948:"

Basher Brains."
Story/Art. Will Eisner
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

MALIBU COMICS

□ **THE LIBERATOR #1**
America invades Nicaragua!
Story. Paul Ryan O'Connor
Art. Chadwick & Burcham
Cover. Jerry Bingham
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **THE OUTLANDER #3**
Motorcyclist murderer.
Story. Scott Finley
Art. Brooks Hagan
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; mature; ships in Dec.]

□ **THE ROVERS #4**
The Pros want Rovers blood.
Story. S.A. Bennett
Art. Bieser
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **STEALTH FORCE #6**
The conclusion of "Bungle in the Jungle."
Story. Mike Valerio
Art. Ollife & Laing
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

□ **THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS #5**
Talking heads and mindless violence.
Story. Jacobs & G. Jones
Art. Hamilton & Mowry
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]



MARVEL COMICS

All Star Comics are now under the regular Marvel Comics logo with a "Star Comics Presents" banner across the top.

□ **ALF #2**
Alf's anti-gravity belt falls in the wrong hands: Brian's science teacher.
Story. Michael Gallagher
Art. Manak & Severin
[\$1.00 color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

□ **ALPHA FLIGHT #57**
Story. Bill Mantlo
Art. J. Lee & DeZuniga
[\$1.00 color comic; ships 12/8]

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #299

The alien costume's back—on Venom's back. (Be sure to read this issue's interview with **Todd McFarlane**, kids.)

Story.....**David Michelinie**
Art.....**McFarlane & McLeod**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

CAPTAIN AMERICA #340

Cap vs. Iron Man.

Story.....**Mark Gruenwald**
Art.....**Kieron Dwyer**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

CAPTAIN JUSTICE #1

What happens if a comic book hero came to life: he'd have a cancelled tv show.

Story.....**J.M. DeMatteis**
Art.....**Steve Leialoha**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1 or 11/17; newsstand o/s 12/24 or 12/10]

DAREDEVIL #253

Once again: the Kingpin.

Story.....**Ann Nocenti**
Art.....**Romita, Jr. & Williamson**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

EXCALIBUR

From the ashes of the X-Men's death rises a new group of mutants; actually in a humorous vein.

Story.....**Chris Claremont**
Art.....**A. Davis & Neary**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

G.I. JOE SPECIAL MISSIONS #10

Story.....**Larry Hama**
Art.....**Wagner & Emberlin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/1]

HEATHCLIFF #23

He's back: Top Dog—the indisputable leader of the band...oops wrong animal!

Story.....**Michael Gallagher**
Art.....**Kremer & Roettcher**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

THE NEW MUTANTS #62

Leapin' and hoppin' from *Moonshadow* comes this issue's guest artist.

Story.....**L. Simonson**
Art/Cover.....**John J. Muth**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]



THE PITT

Bye-bye Pittsburgh.

Story.....**Byrne & Gruenwald**
Art.....**Sal Buscema**
[75¢ color comic; ships in Dec.]

POWER PACK #36

When they made this comic, somebody broke the Master Mold. Guests: the FF.

Story.....**Jon Bogdanove**
Art.....**Hilary Barta**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

PSI-FORCE #18

More new villains than you can shake a cosmic cube at—or whatever in the N.U.

Story.....**Fabian Nicieza**
Art.....**Ron Lim**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #146

Story.....**Chuck Dixon**
Art.....**Kwapisz & Chan**
Cover.....**Joe Jusko**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

SOLO AVENGERS #4

Hawkeye vs. Trickshot by **Tom DeFalco**, with art by **Bright & Rubinstein**; Hello, Scarlet Witch, I am your Death! by **Mallonee** art by **Ridgeway**.
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/24]

SPELLBOUND #6 (of 6)

Last Issue—Double-Sized—Final Showdown with **Zxaxz** (read it backwards).

Story.....**Louis Simonson**
Art.....**Shoemaker & Potts**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

STAR DIGEST #9

Ah, remembering those early issues of *Heathcliff*, *Madballs*, *Muppet Babies* and *Care Bears*.
[75¢ digest comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/31]

STRANGE TALES II #13

Ya got Cloak and Dagger; ya got Punisher; ya got Power Pack; ya got Kingpin; ya got a script by **Terry Austin**; ya got art by **Bringman & Wiacek**.

Still Dr. Strange & His Dark Side, I guess, written **Peter Gillis** drawn by **Case & Embelin**.

Cover.....**Bringman & Austin**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8; newsstand o/s 12/24]

STRIKEFORCE: MORITURI #16

The origin of those famous Monster Morituri.

Story.....**Peter Gillis**
Art.....**Scott Williams**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1]

TALES OF G.I. JOE #4

G.I. Joe #4 reloads.

Story.....**Larry Hama**
Art.....**Trimpe, Abel & D'Agostino**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; no ads; ships 12/1]

THUNDERCATS #22

The Devious Duploids. The Devious Duploids.

Story.....**Rose**
Art.....**Delbo & Simons**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #37

Dakota North guests in this "Moonlighting" send-off with new villain The Slasher.

Story.....**Jim Owsley**
Art.....**Gelger & Keith Williams**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

WEST COAST AVENGERS #30

Arkon unto this villain.

Story.....**Steve Englehart**
Art.....**Milgrom & Machlan**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/1; newsstand o/s 12/24]

MARVEL EPIC COMICS

ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN TRADE PAPERBACK

Reprinting the entire 12-issue series. New painted cover by **Sienkiewicz**.

Story.....**Frank Miller**
Art.....**Bill Sienkiewicz**
[75¢ trade paperback; mature; ships 12/8]

GROO #37

Groo grapes graphically.

Story.....**Aragones & Evanier**
Art.....**Sergio Aragones**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/8]

IRON MAN GRAPHIC NOVEL

A fully computerized g.n., including colorization. No info on the story except it guest stars **Nick Fury**.

Story/Art.....**Mike Saenz**
[75¢ color comic; ships 12/10]

MEDIA ARTS



DOCTOR BOOGIE #2

D.C. emcees a jam session. By **Dave Newell**, **Nick Cuti**, others.
[75¢ color comic; ships in Dec.]

MEGATON COMICS

MEGATON #2

And the villain is...**Wristrocket!**

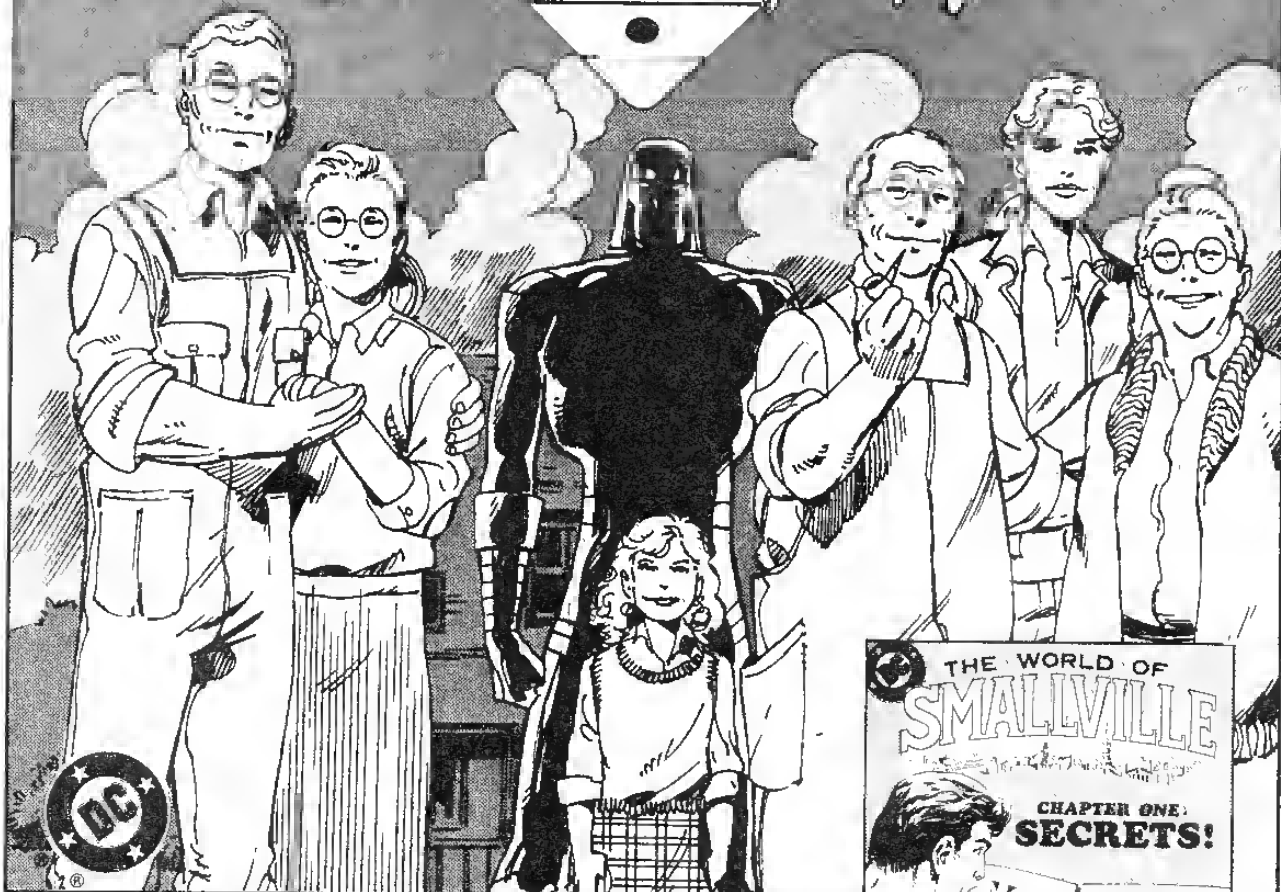
Story.....**Gary Carlson**
Art.....**Washington & Petrie**
[75¢ color comic; ships in Dec.]

MEGATON SPECIAL X-MAS #2

Anthology title for the Megaton continuity.
Story/Art.....**Various**
[75¢ black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

THE WORLD OF SMALLVILLE

THE REST
OF THE
STORY



Before the MAN OF STEEL,TM
there was THE WORLD OF SMALLVILLE
John Byrne • Kurt Schaffenberger • Alfredo Alcalá
The second of 3 inter-locking 4 issue mini-series!
Coming in December

There's a new
team playing the
world's deadliest game ...



CHECKMATE!™

Created by
Paul Kupperberg
John Byrne and
Steve Erwin

A New Format
monthly series
starting in
December

Paul Kupperberg
Steve Erwin
Al Vey





- ☐ **WILDMAN #4**
Willow the Witch is in town.
Story/Art.....Grass Green
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

NEW COMICS GROUP

- ☐ **GET LOST #2**
Reprinting more of the '50s humor title.
With Ross Andru and Mike Esposito.
Cover.....Gray Morrow
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]



- ☐ **YOUNG MASTER #2**
The Lord Yagyu is closing in on the hero.
Story.....Larry Hama
Art.....Val Mayerik
[\$1.75 black-and-white color comic; ships in Dec.]

NOW COMICS

- ☐ **DAI KAMIKAZE #8**
Fear and paranoia. Is someone playing with the crew's minds?
Story.....Kirk Chritton
Art.....Davis & McKenna
[\$1.75 color comic; ships in Dec.]

- ☐ **ORIGINAL ASTRO BOY #6**
Climax of the origin.
Story.....Michael Dimpsey
Art.....Ken Steacy
[\$1.75 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **RUST #7**
All-psychoanalysis issue! Bring your own couch.
Story.....Fred Schiller
Art.....Atkins & McKenna
[\$1.75 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SPEED RACER #7**
Speed and Trixie are kidnapped by the owner of an atomic submarine.
Story.....Lamar Waldron
Art.....Thompson & Thomas
[\$1.75 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SPEED RACER SPECIAL #1**
"The Mach 5 Saga." With 10 pages of illustrations on how to build your own.
Story.....Fred Schiller
Art.....Morgan & Ash
[\$2.00 color comic; ships in Dec.]

ONWARD COMICS

- ☐ **ULTRA KLUTZ #18**
Long lost relatives of the cast reappear. They come for a week and stay a month.
Story/Art.....Jeff Nicholson
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

R.A.K. GRAPHICS

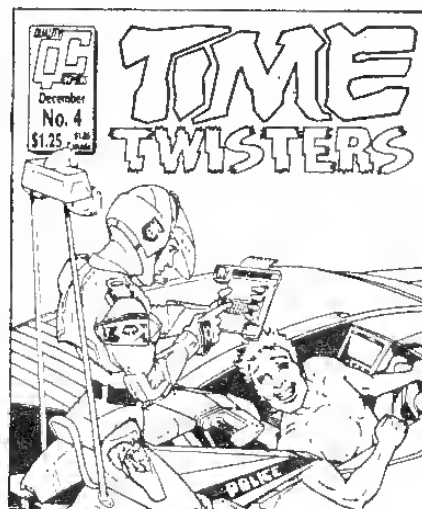
- ☐ **THUNDERMACE #6**
Uh.
Story.....Kraus & Simhauser
Art.....Sellers & Kraus
[\$1.75 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

QUALITY COMICS

- ☐ **BALLAD OF HALO JONES #4**
Terrorists take over "The Clara Pandey." Where Halo Jones is a hostess. You'd have know that if'd you read the entry last time. And a "Judge Anderson" story by Grover & Kitson.
Story.....Alan Moore
Art.....Ian Gibson
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]



- ☐ **JUDGE DREDD #13**
"The Starborn Thing, Part 2" More aliens will hatch, unless Judge Dredd finds them.
Story/Art.....T.B. Grover, Carlos Ezquerra, & Kim Raymond
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **ROGUE TROOPER #13**
Who reports the war on the telly? The Vid-vultures, and Rogue Trooper is about to meet them.
Story.....Gerry Findley-Day
Art.....Brett Ewins
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SAM SLADE—ROBO-HUNTER #13**
Sam protects Joe Kidd, the adult in a 1-year old's body, from all who hate him. Problem: Sam hates him too.
Story.....Alan Grant
Art.....Ian Gibson
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SLAINE THE BESERKER #6**
Slaine fights the ice dragon Mata. Back up by Alvin Gaunt, Joe Staton and M. Belardinelli.
Story.....Pat Mills
Art on both.....M. Belardinelli
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **SPELLBINDERS #11**
Torrents of raging hatred.
Story.....Pat Mills
Art.....Bryan Talbot
Cover.....Tom Grindberg
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **STRONIUM DOG #6**
The annual Killing contest on the planet Zed, if you're breathin'—you win.
Story.....Alan Grant
Art.....Carlos Ezquerra
Cover.....Tom Grindberg
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]



- ☐ **TIME TWISTERS #3**
A rocket from an exploded planet plummets to Earth in 1938. That's where Alan Moore came from—many other tales.
Story.....Alan Moore
Art.....Dave Gibbons, M. White, Brett Ewins, others
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]
- ☐ **2000 AD PRESENTS #19**
The Geeks are on their way to Earth (and you thought they were already here).
Story.....Gerry Finley-Day
Art.....Cam Kennedy
[\$1.25 color comic; ships in Dec.]

RIP OFF

☐ RIP OFF COMIX #17 "BUSTED!"

True stories of run-ins with those nice men your mother always told you to ask if you were lost. Talents include **Dan O'Neill**, **Larry Welz**, **Joshua Ouagmire**, **R.L. Crabb**, **Dori Seda**, **Don Simpson**, **Larry Marder**, and other upstanding citizens. [\$2.95 black-and-white magazine; 52 pages; mature or of prosecutable age; ships in Dec.]

SILVERLINE

☐ ASSASSINS, INC. #5

We are assuming the same creative team 'cause the flyer has no info.

Story.....**Ken Kushner**
Art.....**M. Shaw & Nickel**
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ BIG JOHN STUDD #1

I looked all over the two flyers we got for this book and nowhere does it mention the creative team. All I know is this comic is about some long-haired bulging wrestler and there's a contest to meet him. wow

[\$1.50 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ GLOBAL FORCE #5

Ditto as with *Assassins, Inc.*

Story.....**Ken Kushner**
Art.....**Bill Koch**
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ MUTANTS AND MISFITS #5

As with above.

Story.....**Ken Kushner**
Art.....**Barnett & Gladfelter**
[\$1.95 color comic; ships in Dec.]

SPOTLIGHT COMICS



☐ HECKLE & JECKLE #1

Two stories featuring the Alphonse and Gaston of magpies.

Story.....**Jim Main/Tim Corrigan**
Art.....**Gary Fields/Ray Dirgo**
Cover.....**Jim Engal**
[\$2.00 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ MIGHTY HEROES #3

"The Monsterizer and the Scarecrow" and a Cuckoo Man solo.

Story/Art.....**Bill White, Joe Gill, & Rich Maurizio**
[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ MIGHTY MOUSE #3

MM faces "The Dupli-Cats" again and again; Mighty Heroes back-up by **Joe Gill** and **Rich Maurizio**.

Story.....**Jim Main**
Art.....**Bill White**
Cover.....**Joe Staton**
[\$2.00 color comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ UNDERDOG #3

There's no need to fear in either of these two stories by 1) **John A. Willcox** and **Mark S. Marcus** and 2) **Joe Gill** and **Win Mortimer**. **Gary Fields** does the cover. [\$2.00 color comic; ships in Dec.]

STEELDRAGON PRESS

☐ CAPTAIN CONFEDERACY #8

The most overused headline: "When Titans Clash"; also in this issue "Ant Boy" by **Matt Feazell** and "Saks and Violet" by **Stu Shiffman**.

Story.....**Will Shetterly**
Art.....**Vince Stone**
[75¢ color comic; ships in Dec.]

THOUGHTS AND IMAGES

☐ ALBEDO #12

[\$2.00 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

TRIAD COMICS

☐ HONEYMOONERS #4

48-page holiday issue featuring "She's a Wonderful Wife."

Story.....**R.L. Fleming**
Art.....**Vince Musacchia**
[\$3.50 color comic; ships in Dec.]

TRU STUDIOS

☐ TROLLORDS #14

"Lesson I—This Means War"
Confronting Death on the battlefield.



Back-up by **Fiala & Augustyn**.

Story/Art.....**Benderstadt, Fricke & Augustyn**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

VICTORY PROD

☐ KOMODO AND THE DEFIANTS #4

"The Brotherhood of Telex"

Story.....**Chris Etheridge**
Art.....**Francis Mao**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ PHASE ONE #9

"Tridon Alone"

Story.....**Robert Durham**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ STRIKE #4

"Torn Apart" (Does Eclipse know about this?)

Story.....**Robert Durham**
Art.....**Keith Andrews**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

☐ SHURIKEN #11

"With A Little Lucky"

Story.....**Robert Durham**
Art.....**Michio Ockamura**
[\$1.50 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

VORTEX

#5 of **SAVAGE HENRY** and **TRANSIT**, **YUMMY FUR #8**.

[All \$1.75 black-and-white comics; ships in Dec.]

WEEBEE COMICS

☐ THE ABUNDI SPECIAL #1

A mission takes the Team Abundi into politically neutral territory.

Story.....**Vanessa Howle**
Art.....**Akira**
[\$2.50 black-and-white comic; 48 pages; ships in Dec.]

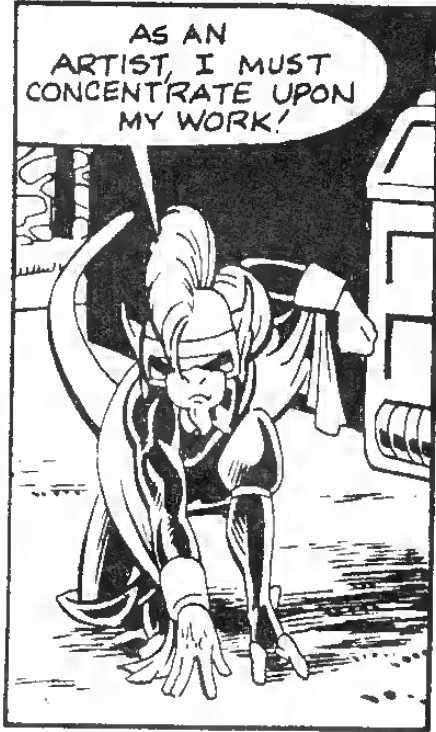


☐ THE ANIVERSE #2

Bombs! Gore! Death! A drunken stupor!

Story/Art.....**Jarvinen, Zimmerman & Van Camp**
[\$1.95 black-and-white comic; ships in Dec.]

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM FRED & BIANCA



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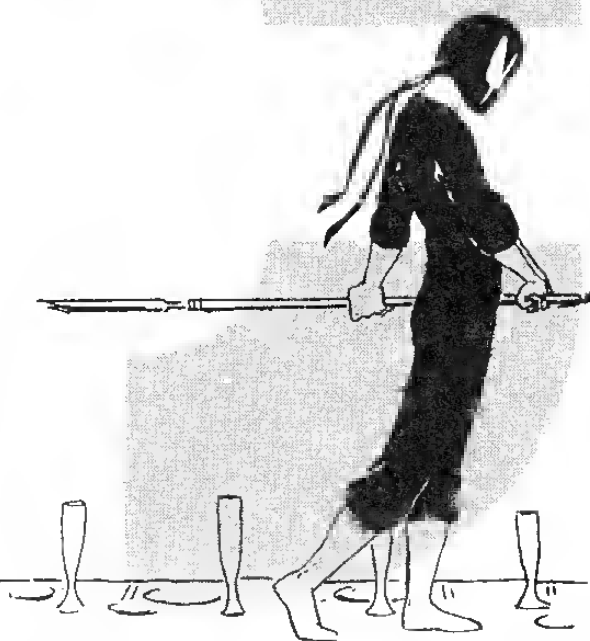


A Vogel • Propst • Kraft Production



HONING THE POTENTIAL EDGE

The five year slow-but-sure upward climb of Comico into the top five.



by David Peattie &
Donald K. Niven

"Decisions can be easy to make, especially when you categorize and segment them into a progression of dichotomous choices."

Dennis LaSorda,
from his editorial in
Comico's first issues

Five years and one month ago, four men who'd known each other since high school got together in Norristown, PA. to publish comics. They started small, with one black-and-white title—a *Primer* in both name and substance, of sorts.

They then expanded to five titles within a year. None, save perhaps one, was very well received.

Not the American success story? The story continues:

Since then, however, they have risen to become one of the five most respected publishers in the industry, behind Marvel, DC, First, and Eclipse. They are, of course, Comico—a.k.a. "Comico, The Comic Company." And they are currently the home of such fan-favorite titles as *Jonny Quest*, *The Elementals*, and *Grendel*, the popular *Robotech* trio of

books, and publishers of the highly-acclaimed maxi-series, *Mage*.

Background: Laying On The Primer

The first five titles launched by the fledgling Comico were longshots, in every sense of the word.

All were brand-new strips, created, written, and drawn by virtual unknowns. Along with the aforementioned *Primer* they were: *Skrog*, by Bill Cucinotta, *Az* by Phil LaSorda, *Slaughterman* by Gerry Giovinco, and *Grendel* by Matt Wagner. All had first appeared in said *Primer* title, which was intended to be an anthology series for aspiring writers and artists.

Only *Grendel* would be able to achieve any lasting popularity; this was especially ironic in that *Grendel* was the only one of the five that had not been created by one of Comico's founders.

Grendel's black-and-white existence lasted three issues, his comrades only two each; *Primer* went for six before breathing its last. By the time that these black-and-whites were ready to fold, in early 1984, the four Comico partners (Cucinotta, Giovinco, and Phil and Dennis LaSorda) had come to the conclusion that the prospects for any black-and-white projects taking off were slim, and that it

looked more and more like Comico's fortunes would be made in color, if at all.

Primer #6 had introduced *Evangeline*, the now infamous "killer nun" belonging to Chuck Dixon and Judith Hunt, and decided that her continuing adventures would be the first of Comico's new color books; the other would be a new concept from Matt Wagner, whose *Grendel* had already proven to be the most popular of Comico's black-and-white books: a concept where a man discovers his own heroism. The book's name would be *Mage*.

Of Mages and Robots

Mage, a 15-issue maxi-series, quickly became a sensation in the comics world, putting both Wagner and Comico on the map.

On the other hand, *Evangeline's* progress hit a snag; conflicts between Comico and creators Dixon and Hunt led to the strip's departure from the company after only two issues, later to resurface under the Lodestone logo for a reprint special, and still later at First Comics, where it currently resides.

The month of *Evangeline's* departure, however, was also marked by an arrival: Bill Willingham's *Elementals* landed on Comico's shores, and has been there ever since.



The Silver Surf...that is, "AZ": one of the less-than-successful strips in Comico's Primer #1

In the months following the first issue of *The Elementals*, Comico negotiated for—and got—the rights to do comics adaptations of all three Harmony Gold *Robotech* series.

The first of these debuted under the title *Macross*, then changed its name to *Robotech The Macross Saga*. *Robotech Masters* and *Robotech The New Generation* soon followed.

Two other only slightly less noteworthy events took place between *Macross* #1 and the arrival of the other two *Robotech* books: one was the addition of a new *Grendel* back-up series to Matt Wagner's *Mage*, and the other was the acquisition of a new series by Roger McKenzie and

newcomer Vince Argondezzi: *The Next Man*.

Yet, the *Next Man* book seemed not to catch on, and was dead after only five issues. But a stronger series would soon spring forth to replace it: Mike Gustovich had agreed to bring his cult-favorite series, *The Justice Machine*, to Comico for a four-issue series co-starring the *Elementals*. Needless to say, the mini-series proved to be quite popular, and *The Justice Machine* is now firmly entrenched at Comico, in its own monthly title.

Still other new titles have followed:

Comico's popular *Jonny Quest*, written by William Messner-Loebs of *Journey* fame, debuted in June 1986.

This featured brand new adventures of the young Hanna-Barbera cartoon adventurer and the entire cast from the television series. *JQ* was followed in October of the same year by the all-new, full color *Grendel*, written by Matt Wagner and drawn by Arnold and Jacob Pander. Much more on both later.

There have been other mini-series as well: *Star Blazers*, by Phil Foglio and Doug Rice of *Dynamo Joe* note; *Jonny Quest Classics*, adapting three episodes of the original animated series by Doug Wildey; and *Fathom*, the aquatic *Elemental*, in a three-part story by Jill Thompson and Larry Schick.

There have been special projects, too: a couple of one-shots graced the shelves this year in the form of *Gumby's Summer Fun Special*, by *Flaming Carrot's* Bob Burden, and Marvel-DC artist Art Adams, and *The Fish Police Special*, on loan from Fishwrap Productions, courtesy of creator/writer/artist Steve Moncuse. There's been a 3-D *Robotech* book, by the team from the *Robotech: Macross* book, that is, Markalan Joplin, writer, and Mikes Leeke and Chen, artists.

And there have been Graphic Novels of *The Fish Police*, *Grendel*, and Doug Wildey's *Rio*, culled from the pages of *The Fish Police*, of course, *Mage*, and *Eclipse Monthly*, respectively; and original graphic novels for *Robotech* and Mike Baron's *The World of Ginger Fox*.

[Whew! And we're sure Comico feels the same.]

All of the foregoing has been part of Comico's policy of "careful expan-

One of Comico's three *Robotech* books: the Masters...no, The New Generation...no, it's *Macross*, that's it: by Carl Macek, Neil Vokes and Rich Rankin.



sion," designed not only to make a profit, but also in hopes of putting out books that, in Gerry Giovinco's terms, "have got some integrity in them."

According to Giovinco, everyone at Comico wants to put out the kind of comics that they'd want to read (and who doesn't?), but only *better*. That kind of commitment to quality, all-out entertainment, and love of the medium is why Comico holds the position it does in comics today.

But you folks out there should know that, especially if you've ever read any of Comico's product. So you don't want to hear about that. You want to know about the books themselves. We've got a bit of a mountain to climb, so why don't we start at the top:

Matt Wagner's Baby

Matt Wagner conceives the current *Grendel* hook as "a series of limited series." Each "limited series" length is determined more by the artist and the specific *Grendel* involved than anything else. The actual number of issues that each series will run is usually not nailed down until it's time to sign the contracts.

Bernie Mireault, best known for his Matrix Graphics work on *Mackenzie Queen* and *The Jam*, will be the artist for issues 13 through 15.

Following that, #s 16 through 19 will comprise a four-parter in which Matt Wagner will not only script, but provide artwork as well. This sequence will be a flashback to the days of the original *Grendel*, Hunter Rose, and will have numerous special features: artistic experiments, experiments with lettering, some "very small" illustrations, and more significantly, *no ads*. No letter-cols, either. Just 32 pages of story and artwork. Editor Diana Schutz claims that "it's Matt's intention to treat each issue like a novel."

An additional incentive to purchase those four issues (as if you needed one) is the back-up series that will run through all four: a transitional story that bridges the gap between *Mage: The Hero Discovered* and the long-awaited *Mage II: The Hero Defined*. The latter will have to be long-awaited for a while longer; according to Comico, it's not expected to be on sale much before the summer of 1989. Meantime, the *Mage* transitional story will have artwork fully painted by Wagner. The first installment of this so-called "bridge" will be entirely written in French! (Where's R.J.M. Lofficer when we need them?) Not to worry, though... Schutz claims the French will be "easy, not at all complicated" so that we won't all need translators for it.

#s 20-23 also comprise a four-part story, about which Schutz would only



From Bernie Mireault's 3-issues on *Grendel* (here from #14), then creator Matt Wagner does 4 issues.

say that the art team for the series would consist of newcomer Hannibal King (a discovery of *Miracleman*'s John Totleben) and inker Tim Sale, best known for his work on the *Thieves' World* series of Graphic Novels by Starblaze/Donning.

Quest-ions Answered

Before going any further, we should clarify once and for all that Comico's *Jonny Quest* series was never, ever intended to be a limited series. The misunderstanding, according to editor Diana Schutz, came about when it was discovered that the original contract with Hanna-Barbera was for only 12 issues. The truth is that Comico plans to keep extending their contract with the folks at H-B as long as the *JQ* book continues to sell, and that this has always been their plan. Got that? Good...

A smidgeon of background, for can any mention of Jonny Quest—The Youngest American Hero—be complete without proper tribute to his father—no, not Dr. Benton Quest, but rather, the man who fleshed out Jonny and the other characters onto the phosphor-dot screen—Doug Wildey.

Jonny Quest—whose first name came from Joseph Barbera and last name came from Wildey looking through the L.A. phone book—was Wildey's first animation job. First airing in 1964, *JQ* was the second animated program to appear in prime time (after *The Flintstones*, so essentially the first *serious* animated prime time show), the first series to appear on all three networks, and without a doubt, one of the most endeared shows of its genre (if not the pioneer of a new genre in and of itself). Wildey, in an interview in *Amazing Heroes* (#95) summarized Jonny by



Two of the guest artists on Jonny Quest. Above: Ernie Colon mysticism issue (#19); below: a Dan Spigle panel from issue #21 about Race's past. Both written by William Messner Loebbs.

saying "What I tried to concentrate on were the characters and the relationships between the characters." And that is what has been accomplished to a superlative degree in the comic book series.

William Messner-Loebbs, who has been on the book from the beginning, will continue to script the series. Reflecting back, in an article in the aforementioned *AH* #95, Bill said, "The image in the writing is that everything is through Jonny's consciousness." Of course, there's the adventure, too, as Bill said, "The rationale for the old show was adventure. You can do adventure for kids, adventure for adults, and in some cases, cross the boundaries for everyone. Hopefully, we are accomplishing that here."

His inspiration? If I may, a fascinating quote from Bill from the *Comics Scene Special* #1: "Sometimes when I'm working on a particular scene, I think, 'How would Carl Barks have handled this?' He had the right amount of explanation and research for a light adventure comic, and yet was

able to keep everybody's character in order. That's pretty much what I'm trying to do with *Jonny Quest*."

Newly installed art team Marc Hempel and Mark Wheatley continue



on the series as well. Fill-ins will still appear occasionally, however; for instance, #19, which will be drawn by Ernie Colon, and #21, which will feature artwork by Dan Spigle.

We are also told that Art Cover has written an inventory issue, to be used if and when Messner-Loebbs should need a breather (check much of the rest of the article if you think *JQ* is all he's doing).

Schutz wanted to mention how grateful she is to the folks at Hanna-Barbera for their leniency with the artists' portrayals of the *JQ* cast. In particular, praise was heaped upon H-B liaison Judy Fireman, whom Schutz called "very enlightened" about the realities of producing comics based on cartoon tv shows.

Insofar as future issues are concerned, look for #18, which will probably be out as you read this, to be a film noir story, with the spotlight on the Quest's ever-vigilant protector, Race Bannon, as he plays detective.

#19, the Ernie Colon issue, will be a tale heavy in mysticism, while #20 will swing almost entirely in the other direction: an issue featuring a tale of the future with a well-known comics writer making an appearance, in the mythical town of "Munden's Corner."

#21's fill-in by Dan Spigle will focus on Race Bannon's past, and #22 will also be a comedic issue. #'s 23-24 will be a two parter, itself a rarity for this title.

There is going to be a 3-issue mini-series on Jezebel Jade (see under "Many Minis" subhead) about how she met Race Bannon, and some talk about a three-issue series on Dr. Zin.

Schutz also hinted at a future story that would put the focus on Jonny's pal (no, not Bandit)—Hadji—to be written by Nadine Messner-Loebbs, Bill's wife; when this story would appear is uncertain at present.

Robotech-tach-toe

Comico's other editor, Maggie Brenner, reminded us that all three of Comico's highly popular *Robotech* series are intended to end as soon as they run out of episodes, and that the end is almost in sight for at least two of them.

For the record, the final issue of *Robotech Masters* will be #23, while *Robotech The New Generation* will end with #25, both scheduled for some time in 1988.

Robotech The Macross Saga has a while longer to go, ending with #36 in 1989. There doesn't seem much point in describing what future issues of each will bring, since everyone who's reading the books knows that writers Mike Baron (*Masters*) and Markalan Joplin (the others) are adap-



With #21 *Robotech Masters* has new art team: Thomas Tenney and Rich Rankin (above from #23).

ting the original episodes of the animated tv series. Brenner did, however, wax enthusiastic about the new art teams that *Masters* and *New Generation* will soon have.

Masters #20 will see the debut of new art team Harrison Fong and Bill Anderson. Fong, it should be noted, is also the penciller for Dark Horse Comics' *Mecha*, indicating a genuine

unbridled fascination with giant robots. *New Generation* will unveil its new art team with #21. The lucky gents are Thomas Tenney and Rich Rankin. Both teams have already done *Robotech* work in the past, and Brenner feels that both teams will bring an added glow and vitality to each book's final year.

Deux ex Justice Machina

While two of the *Robotech* books gain new art teams, *Justice Machine* gains a new writer. *JM* creator Mike Gustovich described it, in the *Comico Black Book*, as a "book about people—though admittedly people with uncommon abilities—but people nonetheless. The human condition is unchanging." This ideal is carried on as Tony Isabella steps down and is replaced, as of #14, by Doug Murray. Murray, best known for his work on Marvel's *The 'Nam* and other war-vein titles, has never done superheroes before, but according to editor Brenner, "you'll never know it from his scripts."

Before Doug takes over, however, we still have several month's worth of Tony Isabella scripts about the group from Georwell—"the 1984-type society of sometimes less than subtle oppression"—and the overall picture to come looks like this:

Things are not always what they seem in *Justice Machine*. Below from #15, new writer Doug Murray's second issue. Look for a lot more science fiction.





"Is that a sword in your pocket...?" Cover to *Elementals* #20 by Bill Willingham and Keith Wilson.

From #8-14, things are not what they seem for our heroes. A lot more straightforward science fiction will be finding its way into the series. While Brenner was reluctant to give away any of the surprises that Tony and Doug have planned, she did reveal that: Blazer's new costume would have complications for the team sometime soon; there would also soon be some changes in Diviner, including a revision of her powers; Youthquake will

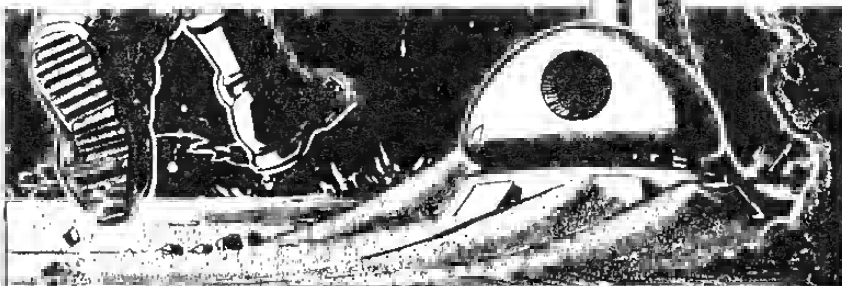
become an official member of the team; and in #18 readers will get a "bold, new look" at New Atlantis and its overseer, Mr. Hamilton.

Finally, and most tantalizingly, Brenner hinted that the popular character of Demon might *not* be gone for good, and that a mini-series starring Demon is already being considered.

Elementals, my dear Watson

From Harlan Ellison and Ken Steacy's graphic novel *Night and the Enemy* compiling all five Earth-Kyba stories in color for the first time.

Terrence had high-leaped the two miles across the empty, airless planetoid to the hermetically sealed bubble in the rocks. His primary wish was to set the hutch's beacon signal so his returning fleet could track him.



As reticent as Brenner was about the *Justice Machine* book, she was even more so with *The Elementals*, Comico's other super-group series.

After mentioning the artistic fill-ins coming up, by such artists as Jill Thompson, Grant Miehm, and at least one issue by Mike Chen, she did see fit to mention three upcoming plotlines: one, which will actually be drawn by series originator, Bill Willingham, will detail the return of Chrysalis and something called "The Book of Creation," or what it is that evangelists do in their off-hours.

Also forth-coming are a trip to South America, to deal with Shining Past rebels, and a trip to Canada, in which a new character called Thor will confront the Elementals over the dawn of the New Heroic Age. (This story is *not* intended as a "dig" at Marvel's expense.)

Finally, we were told that Mike Chen's fill-in issue would be a flashback spotlighting Vortex.

Projects Adventing

In addition to their roster of ongoing titles, Comico keeps busy with numerous special books, one-shots, and graphic novels, all done with the same Comico commitment to high quality that marks their regular series. Among those now in preparation are (hang onto your hats, boys and girls):

Night and the Enemy—a graphic novel due in November, written by Harlan Ellison with art by Ken Steacy. It will be an 8½" x 11" book in full color. Included will be all five of the celebrated Earth-Kyba stories—a two-century long interstellar conflict, which will be tied together by an all-new framing sequence written by Ellison especially for this edition. Two of these stories, according to editor Diana Schutz, have not been seen since the mid-1950's, two of the three appeared only in black-and-white in *Epic Magazine*.

All of the stories will appear in color for the first time, a good majority of the material has been completely re-done by Steacy, including creating some completely new interior artwork, as well as what has been described as a "sensational new color cover." It has been said before, but Comico basks in the revelation that *Night and the Enemy* will be "the graphic novel hit of the year."

[More *Night and the Enemy* news: Producer-Director Roger Corman, director of the first *Little Shop of Horrors* and other neat films in his first network television venture, and NBC Television have reportedly hired Harlan Ellison to write a teleplay based on the stories. Called "Cutter's World," the two-hour pilot is not yet

scheduled for production, but there is talk about it being a mid-season replacement or a fall 1988 slot, and, of course there is chatter about it possibly being a regular series, but we all know how those things go, don't we?—ED]

The Space Ghost Special—a 48-page book due in December, will be written by Mark Evanier with art by (drumroll, please) Steve Rude, the man with "Born to draw Space Ghost's smile when he found out he'd draw The Space Ghost Special. (It's really Blip.)



Ghost" tattooed on his arm. On actually sitting down and drawing S.G., Kirby-Award winner Rude said, in a recent *Comics Journal* (#117) that "[Alex] Toth [who did a lot of the show's original model sheets back in the mid '60s.—ED] gave him [S.G.] a very particular set of proportions, which I had to memorize." In the



Writer Mark Evanier promises a rogue's gallery of villains from the series in the *Space Ghost Special*.

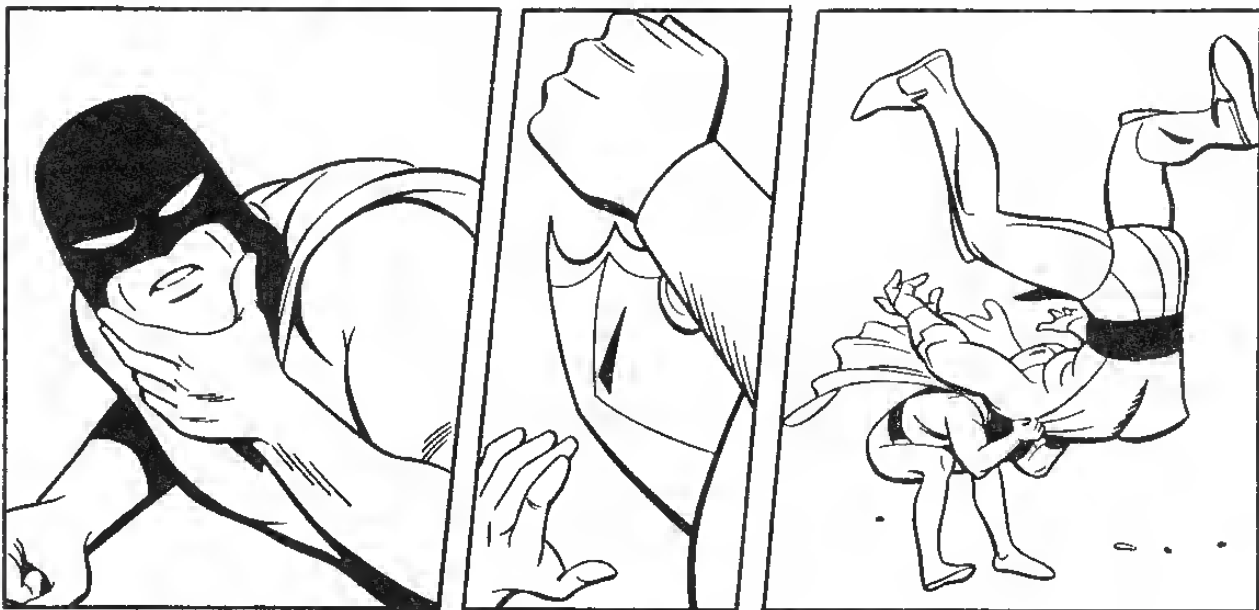
Comico Black Book Rude puts it this way: "Most important to me was to capture the dramatic essence of this show while keeping things simple."

Ken Steacy will paint backgrounds on the book; Willie Blyberg will ink. As we stated, it will be a 48-page,

deluxe squarebound edition and will sell for \$3.50. It will also contain original models sheets from the TV series [At least one of them will be by Toth!].

Evanier expects to cram in as many old Space Ghost villains from the tv

The Hero in action! Space Ghost meets his greatest challenge head on (or head over). Not shown: S.G.'s tattoo "Born to be drawn by Steve Rude."



Max Headroom in 3-D Special—will adapt one of the episodes of the late tv series starring the hologram hero (and hence will include all of the cast from there). The episode served will be the one that centers around the group called "Blanks," who have had their records removed from the big, bad central computer and who are threatening to destroy same. The adaptation is done by Comico's resident workhorse, Bill Loebs, and will be drawn by the Pander Brothers of aforementioned *Grendel* fame. A firm release date, however, still eludes Comico, as negotiations with Max's licensing people, located in New York and in England, are going slowly. Despite this, Comico is hopeful that the book will ship by late summer of 1988 [*The firm date will, no doubt, be reported in an upcoming AH.—ED*].



Robotech Special—tentatively planned for May of '88. It will be written by Markalan Joplin with art by Thomas Tenney and Mike Chen. It will adapt the "first" Robotech episode that is the prologue to *Robotech Masters*, in full process painted color, and alludes to the end of *Macross*.

From Bernie Mireault's The Jam: Urban Adventure a.k.a. "The Jammer's Super-Cool Color Injected Turbo-Powered Adventure from Hell #1" takes place before the new Jam series.



Many Minis

Have no fear, oh lovers of the mini-series; they have not been neglected—not by a longshot. There are at least four in the works from Comico. They are:

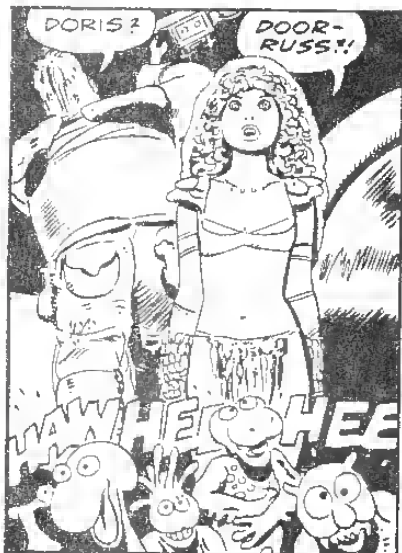
Ginger Fox—taking up from the recent graphic novel, in four issues by Mike Baron, who has decided that he will write the mini-series, and not just supervise as he said in the recent interview in *AH* #128, and will have not only the artistic skills of those Pander Brothers, but it will also be co-plotted by said siblings. The plot within has Ginger in the soap operatic milieu of Hollywood making, what Mike Baron has referred to as "the ultimate horror movie"—ooo, scary—as well as dealing with an actor who has AIDS, her ex-husband threatening to take their child, and Ginger possibly being replaced. Ah, just another quiet day in tinsel town.

If successful, this may lead to an regular, open-ended *Fox* series.

Ribit!—written and drawn by Frank Thorne of *Red Sonja* fame. The series will be a four-issue one. *Ribit!*, whose exclamation point is credited to Comico editor Diana Schutz, is a flat-chested, green and thirty-inch tall woman, who sounds like a frog, eats worm beetles, and had hair that looks "Like a riot of leeches," as creator

Thorne described it. *Ribit!* involves a weird battle twist sword-and-sorcery and high technology weapons. Thorne has produced the book utilizing the same kind of watercolor techniques he used on *Moonshine McJuggs*, which appeared in *Playboy* [I never saw it. I only read the articles—ED]. Editor Schutz calls *Ribit!* a "very well written, a G-rated *Ghita*," and stresses that while it will have no nudity, it will nevertheless be an adult book.

About his work in *Ribit!*, Frank Thorne said, in an interview in *Amazing Heroes* (#123) "I'm enjoying this as much as I've enjoyed anything." As, undoubtedly, we readers will, too.



No, door-rust. *Ribit!* changes from lizard to girl in Frank Thorne's four-issue series.

Jezebel Jade—a three-issue series spinning off the character from *Jonny Quest*. It will, naturally, be written by regular *Jonny Quest* scripter Bill Messner-Loebs with artwork by Adam Kubert, who drew *Jonny Quest* #6.

In the story, told completely in flashback, we will learn how Jade met her paramour, none other than fearless Race Bannon, who is at this time a novice secret agent tracking a kidnapped scientist. Eventually, the two meet, join forces and find themselves pitted against the entire underworld of Hong Kong.

The fourth and final mini-series in the works is actually two mini-series, featuring the long awaited return of one Cliff Secord. Yes, folks, it's (fanfare: sound the trumpets, bassoons, cannons, etc.):

The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine—the pair of mini-series will be running three issues each, and starring that popular and controversial character created by Dave Stevens—the Rocketeer (Oh, you guessed!). Because Stevens is so meticulous in his artwork, as anybody and everybody who's ever seen his art can attest. Comico will wait until all three



The ROCKETEER

ADVENTURE MAGAZINE



Yes, it's the return of Cliff Secord by Dave Stevens in two mini-series with a 30s pulp flavor.

issues are in-house before scheduling and soliciting the series.

The look of the series, according to Stevens, as quoted in *The Comico Black Book* is "definitely '30s pulp." But will it be the all-out action we're used to? As Stevens said in a recent interview in *The Comics Journal* (#117), "Everybody's going to be expecting some hijinks and wild action in the first issue. And the only thing that happens in that story is a quick

four panels of fist fighting. That's the only action in the story." Look for more exploration of the characters themselves in future issues. "One of the upcoming stories," Stevens remarked in the same *TCJ* interview, "is about a freak show—it's Cliff's background as a kid."

Action-smaction, everyone has fallen in love with the characters: Cliff, Betty, Peevy (whom Stevens modeled after *Jonny Quest* creator

THE
OFFICIAL
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HEADQUARTERS
AND MOBILE
CAMP
GROUND



The back-up in *The Rocketeer Adventure Magazine* will be "The Galactic Girl Guides" by Elaine Lee and Michael Wm. Kaluta springboarding from their *Starstruck* series.

Doug Wildey), etc., and will surely be enthralled with the final result.

Each issue will be graced by a full painted cover by Stevens in the classic manner of the pulps.

In addition to the *Rocketeer*, each issue will contain another installment

in the lives of cookie sellers to the universe, *The Galactic Girl Guides*, as written by Elaine Lee with art by Mike Kaluta. While this back-up series does bridge off from the Marvel-Epic title *Starstruck*, editor Schutz wants it known that this series

Upcoming from Comico and Mike Barr and Alan Davis: a comic whodunnit *The Maze Agency*.



will be "somewhat" more accessible than *Starstruck* was.

Honing The Future

With five successful years under its belt, Comico looks forward to a future bright with a promise. Towards that end, plans to continue their slow-but-sure expansion are already in the works. Their outlook for the future is one that will include new books—both within normal genres and groundbreaking ideas, new formats—daring and bold to display the ideas the way they should be seen and not settling for less, and new talent—the brightest on the horizon, as well as a few old favorites in new projects.

A perfect example of most all the above will be in the summer of '88, when a new open-ended series will make its debut:

The Maze Agency—a series written by Mike Barr with art by Hannibal King. According to Barr, as quoted in *The Comico Black Book*, this is his "proudest achievement"—a uniting of his two major interests: whodunits and comics. It's the story of Jennifer Mays, a professional detective in every sense of the word. Then along comes Gabriel Webb (no relation to Jack), who is a freelance writer—ala *True Detective*—nee part-time detective. Their relationship and their investigations form two halves of a sure-to-be fascinating book, which Barr himself has described as "A love story about detectives; a detective story about love."

Comico also plans to continue with a series of seasonal specials for *Gumby*. #2 is planned for Winter of 1988, and will not only reunite the entire clay cast, but also the strange and wonderful team of Bob Burden (who is tentative at this point) and Art Adams, who brought us, as we said before, the more-than-delightful *Gumby Summer Fun Special*.

Said Comico's Bob Schreck: "We're definitely looking to expand, but we aren't going to put out a hundred titles just to say we've got a hundred titles out. We want our books to be comics we can be proud of." This means, quite simply, comics that are fun, comics that are well done, comics that add to the growth of the medium itself. And, with Comico's current track record, many fans would say that, even after five years, they're still off to a good start. ●

[More future information about Comico's titles (as well as hundreds more) will be included in the monumental extravaganza: *Amazing Heroes Preview Special*, which should be coming to your local comic book shop next month. Wow! Can you stand the wait? No? Then sit down!—KD]

McFARLANE

Caught in a Spider's Web



by Frank Garcia

Todd McFarlane, a 25-year old artist presently living in New Westminister B.C. (a suburb of Vancouver), has reached such heights in the comics industry so fast, the experience is almost dizzying. After only three years in the business, he has already drawn a variety of comic books including such famed titles as *The Incredible Hulk* (#330-335), *Daredevil* (#41), *G.I. Joe* (#61), *Detective Comics* "Batman Year Two" (#576-580) and an extended stay on DC's *Infinity Inc.*, (#'s 14-37). As this interview illustrates, McFarlane has strong opinions on a variety of

subjects including his role in the industry, inkers, and the comic book companies he works for.

McFarlane was born in Calgary, Alberta. While attending Eastern Washington University on a baseball scholarship, he got sidetracked to the

field of graphic arts. This ultimately lead him to the world of comic book art. After deluging the companies with his work for 14 months, he finally started working for Marvel on a title called *Coyote*.

McFarlane is unusual in the



Hi, Todd McFarlane inks Todd McFarlane in *Amazing Spider-Man* #300. Can you say good job, Todd?

business in that he worked for both DC and Marvel simultaneously, joining such recognizable names as Frank Miller, Howard Chaykin and Bill Sienkiewicz.

As Todd's work gets more and more noticed, I'm convinced we will see accolades—such as have been given to the aforementioned names—also, rightfully, bestowed on Todd McFarlane.

A MAZING HEROES: What are some of your current and future projects?

McFARLANE: As of this moment, I'm taking over *Amazing Spider-Man* #298. I'm also drawing *Incredible Hulk*.

McFARLANE: Today, I got a phone call [from Marvel] and they said starting with *Amazing Spider-Man* #300 I'm taking over the inking of the book.

This book will be a double-sized issue. Although I take over on #298-299, Bob McLeod's inking my work there. Starting with #300 again, they're trying to get Terry Austin to do some work on it—a chapter maybe. If I can get anything from Terry, I'll be happy.

Between now and two months if they find out I'm horrible at inking, they can kick me off! But hopefully, I can stay on it for a long time... doing pencil and ink.

In penning and inking *Spider-Man*, I don't have time for the *Hulk*, so tomorrow, I've got to phone up my editor on the *Hulk*, and break the news to him.

So you got the scoop even before he got the scoop! [laughs]

AH: You don't have to worry, the publishing process takes a long time... by the time this comes out, it'll be safe to reveal that. Of course, everything we're discussing here about inkers and stuff is subject to change, correct?

McFARLANE: Right.

AH: Are you happy that you're doing *Spider-Man*? To begin at such a prestigious number like #300 must be an honor.

McFARLANE: Yes. I think with this storyline, they'll be bringing back the red and blue costume.

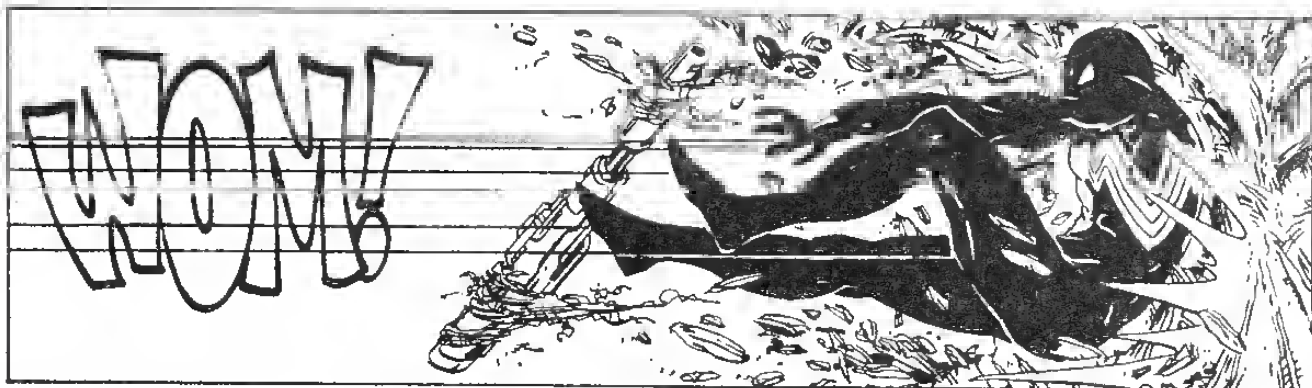
AH: They were switching back and forth with the black one.

McFARLANE: Well, this time they're not. This time they're going back to have him wearing the black on a regular basis. Maybe I'm wrong, I think from what I heard, he flip-flopped back-and-forth and the response from an editor was "this is no good, there's no continuity," [so] they put him in the black one on a consistent basis, but, now starting #300 they'll revert to the old red and blue.

But the black costume will still be out there. It'll be in the Marvel universe. I don't know what that means, but that's the information I've got so far. Maybe that means a villain's going to take over the we'll have a bad *Spider-Man*.

AH: No big deal, but which version do you prefer?

In #300, Spidey will be thrown back into his red and blue costume instead of the black, which was one of the reasons why Todd decided to do him.





"Spider-Man is a good job; who ever gets to draw Spider-Man?" (or The Thing from the Fantastic Four for that matter): again from Spider-Man #300.

McFARLANE: [laughs] Personally, I like the red and blue costume. Actually, at the time that I was hunting for another book [to draw], [so] I went to New York [when I was doing] *The Hulk*, and was finishing the "Batman: Year Two," I went to the Spider-Man office...

AH: ...Spider-Man office?

McFARLANE: Actually, Jim Salicrup's office. He edits the Spider-Man books. He said he had some openings on *Peter Parker* and *The* but I had no idea I could get started on *Amazing*. I thought I'd have to start in a corner, but that's one of the reasons that attracted me back to the Spider-Man book. I've always liked him. But because I don't read comics anymore, the black [costume] is kind of alien to me. But the decision to go back to the old costume, that was one of the reasons I decided to do Spider-Man.

AH: You're relatively new in the industry, do you have any specific direction you'd like to go in your artistic career?

McFARLANE: [thoughtful] Yes. Right now, the biggest thing I'm finding is I have the work. *Spider-Man* is a good job; who ever gets to draw Spider-Man? or *Batman, Year Two*. Recently, I've been able to draw the big characters after *Infinity*. I'm getting some of the jobs that when doing *Infinity*, and breaking in, that was my goal—to get to a big selling book. Now I have this chance to bounce to the next level—that some editors like my stuff—I have the confidence knowing that if I get fired on one book, I can pick up another one somewhere else. What I'm looking for is getting [my artwork] across on the printed

page, exactly how I draw. It's one of the frustrations I've had.

AH: But, the baxter paper makes artwork look very good.

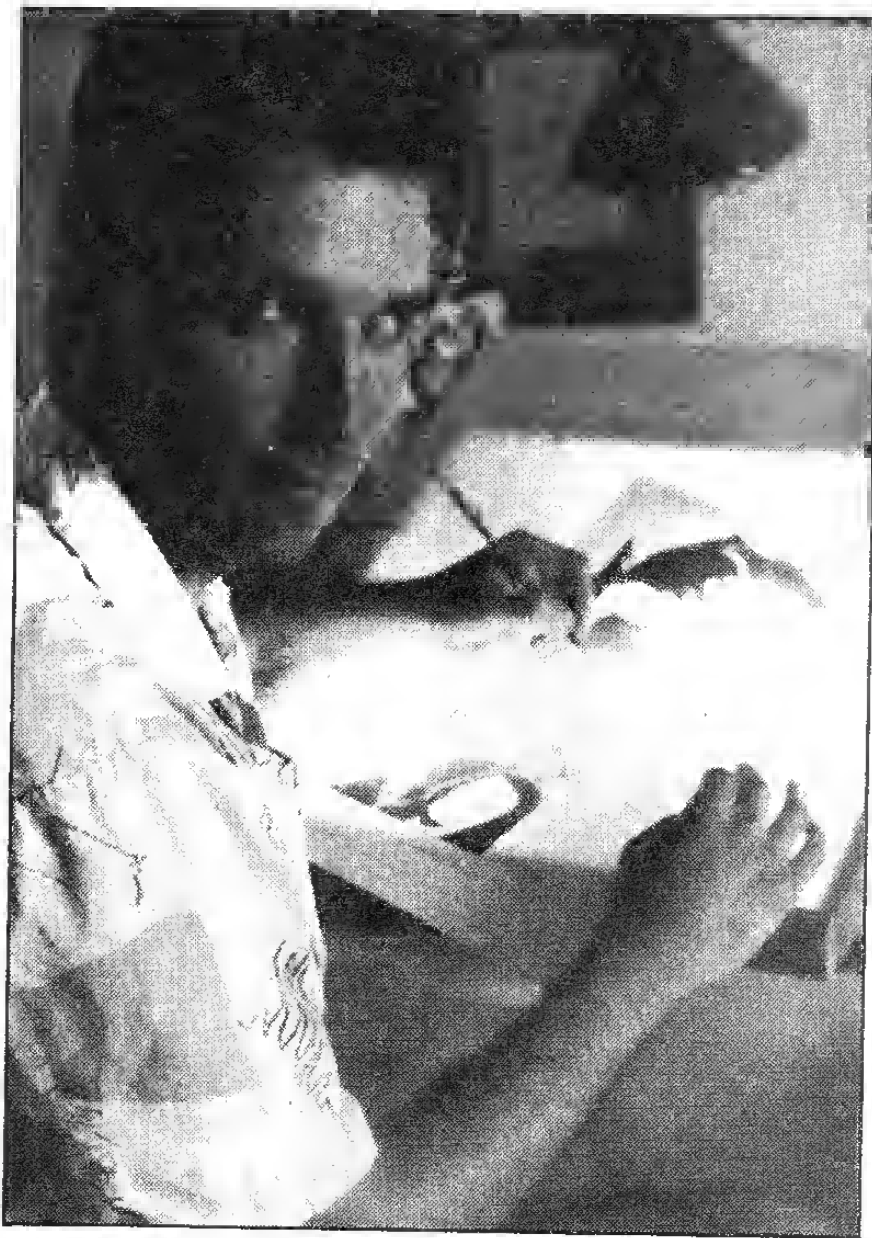
McFARLANE: No, no, it comes across, what I'm saying is that: if you talk to most pencillers, we'll have a problem with our inkers. It's the same way most inkers have a problem with pencillers. We're just as egotistical.

We think our work is just as sacred.

I'm in the business for three years now—I don't honestly believe that this work that I put down on paper has yet reached the printed page. Just because of deadlines, I've had to rush it out or I've given it to inkers who've had to rush it out, which is part of this business, not to take anything away from inkers. It's just that this business

With Todd inking himself on *Amazing Spider-Man*, he hopes to show readers exactly how he draws.





McFarlane: "Concentrating more on good storytelling" and "fighting for the next level" of artistry.

is so crazy with deadlines. They are done in a certain way. Some of the inkers I've got have been in the business for 20 years. They've got a certain style and they're not going to change it to accomodate me. Consequently, it doesn't bother me, I'm sure in 20 years if I ink someone else, I'd do it my way too.

I feel very frustrated that I have the work, the checks, but the art is not getting across the printed page. I don't think readers are actually seeing what I can draw.

That's why I'm dropping *The Hulk* and taking over *Spider-Man*, because now for the first time, you will see the way I draw and my style [Actually, the first public exposure of McFarlane's pen and inks was in Detective Comics "Batman, Year Two" #578 even though in that cover it says Alfredo Alcala inked it. See later question.—ED].

But if you hate *Spider-Man* [when I start it] then you hate me. You hate Todd McFarlane. But if you love *Spider-Man* then you love Todd

McFarlane. I felt in the past I could not take the blame for bad or praise for good [work] because a lot of times, it was so heavily inked that it wasn't my style. I'd say that happened 98 per cent of the time. The only thing that save me on *Infinity* was some of the weird layouts.

AH: Oh, those were great. Some of them were really well done, I remember a page where Hourman and Dr. Midnite [Infinity #28] were drawn very large and held panels of the story.

McFARLANE: Yes, but over at Marvel, they don't like that style all that much. In the *Hulk* and the *Batman*, I've toned it way down. It's not *Infinity*. Many people were apprehensive as I took over the *Hulk* that it would appear like *Infinity*. Now, *Infinity* was just a phase. I know enough that every book shouldn't look like *Infinity*. It shouldn't have giant dice or stuff like that.

But to get back to your original question about goals, I'd like to make it a combination of graphics and storytelling. You can take a guy like

John Byrne and George Perez—a lot of people like their stuff...they don't have to do fancy layouts and their stuff looks dynamite. So I have to work to make my stuff look dynamite even though I don't do weird layouts...and if I can combine it with the layouts, I have two things going for me.

However, one of the drawbacks I had on *Infinity* was...I wasn't concentrating on drawing ability. I was only designing each page. Consequently, some of the storytelling lacked—and was confusing—looking back at it in hindsight.

AH: How, then, would you summarize some of your short range and long range goals for the future?

McFARLANE: I'm concentrating more on good storytelling. I've been more relaxed in the past eight months. If I ever did go back on the *Infinity* style, I'd be able to use it more on a constructive way. I'd use graphics and storytelling.

AH: Will we see these kinds of graphic layouts in *Spider-Man*? Or, is that too far ahead for you?

McFARLANE: You won't see anything near the *Infinity* stuff. In fact, if you look at the last six months of *Infinity* you'll see I toned it down and have done more on storytelling and not getting so crazy with it.

[A copy of *Infinity* #30 is picked from the table. It's the sequel to The Last Days of the Justice Society of America.]

AH: This one was great, very character oriented. I noticed you drew Dr. Fate's cape in a real stylish flair—it was appropriately exaggerated, if I can say that—But I found the capes reminiscent of Marshall Rogers's style [who also did a now classic series on *Batman*.—ED].

McFARLANE: Marshall Rogers does good capes. And so does John Byrne, and Gil Kane. One of the new guys, Rick Leonardi on *Cloak and Dagger* draws—*Whew!*—beautiful capes.

This is what happened to me, when I broke into the business. I got the chance to do *Infinity* through Don Newton—one of the most underrated artists at the time, [he] passed away [after completing four issues of *Infinity*.—ED]. So they had a book without an artist. I just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

AH: So they grabbed you.

McFARLANE: Yes. Sad as it is, these are some of the breaks we make when I took over the book. It had been done in a certain style, like most comic books are done. I knew I wasn't as good as Jerry Ordway.

AH: He started it with Mike Machlan.

McFARLANE: Right...I knew I wasn't as good as Ordway, Newton, Perez, and a whole slew of other guys that worked on the book. I was just

another young working kid. I had a lot of handicaps in my drawing ability so all I could do to stand out was to do something weird with the page.

If I drew the basic 1-2-3, Jack Kirby panels, my name would have been interchangeable with 15 names in the business. I made a conscious effort to give you a real look on the page to notice. Some thought I was wrong, and others thought I was right. Whether you hated or loved it, you noticed my name!

For survival's sake, I had to do something different and give you weird pages and grab onto things like capes. You can stylize faces but I was still working on that, so I thought okay, I can stylize capes. I was able to get across a certain style that was consistent.

AH: What about when you moved to Marvel? Were they aware of your style?

McFARLANE: A lot of people were very wary of me because of that style. It didn't transcend to Marvel books, but for Epic it would be fine. But in *Spider-Man*, you have a lot of 10-12 year olds reading this and if you bring in weird layouts, you'll turn them off.

AH: You're suggesting 10-12 year olds are more satisfied with with simple layouts?

McFARLANE: I'd say that's true. But the average person on the street, when shown a comic; a *Spider-Man*, they have a style in mind, which has been there for 50 years.

AH: There's an image that goes with them.

McFARLANE: That's right. I tell people: "remember when you were nine years old, and you were buying *Spider-Man*, it was John Romita, Sr., put yourself in that nine-year old body and you'd see that artwork. All of a sudden, after nine months someone came in and [Todd slaps his hands together] changes style! You'd be offended as a nine-year old kid!" As beautiful as it is, as graphically illustrated as it is, you will be offended. It's a drastic style. The majority of people don't want to be scared with what they are buying. They want a certain look.

AH: We have a more sophisticated viewpoint for it.

McFARLANE: Yes.

AH: We're then talking about people like Howard Chaykin, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Frank Miller. Their mature styles would be hard for kids to take.

McFARLANE: Yes. Which is good they're out there, because I feel a lot of people who are putting down Marvel and DC, to me they have simple solution—stop buying them and go buy stuff you like.

Comic books have certain style, and



Todd's favorite work to date: in *Infinity, Inc. #30* it "overall came together"—note the stylized capes.

graphic novels have a certain look. We can do better, but we're not going to get into some of the things you can in a lot of comics, because the majority of those buying are kids.

AH: So, very simply, there's enough diversity of titles for different people.

McFARLANE: That's right.

AH: For children, teen-agers, and adults, like *Dark Knight*; *Green Arrow*; *The Longbow Hunters* is also pretty adult. There was an arrow that went through a guy's ear...ugh!

McFARLANE: [laughter] Again, there's a product there. I know Mike [Grell], he likes to draw so he has complete control. He's able to do something because of the format. It's going to alienate some buyers because of the price, and others also because it's DC—some don't buy them at all. You've already cut down your audience.

But there's enough hardcore audience. Like you said, there's enough

diversity for everyone. I feel there's enough there for 2 to 72 year olds.

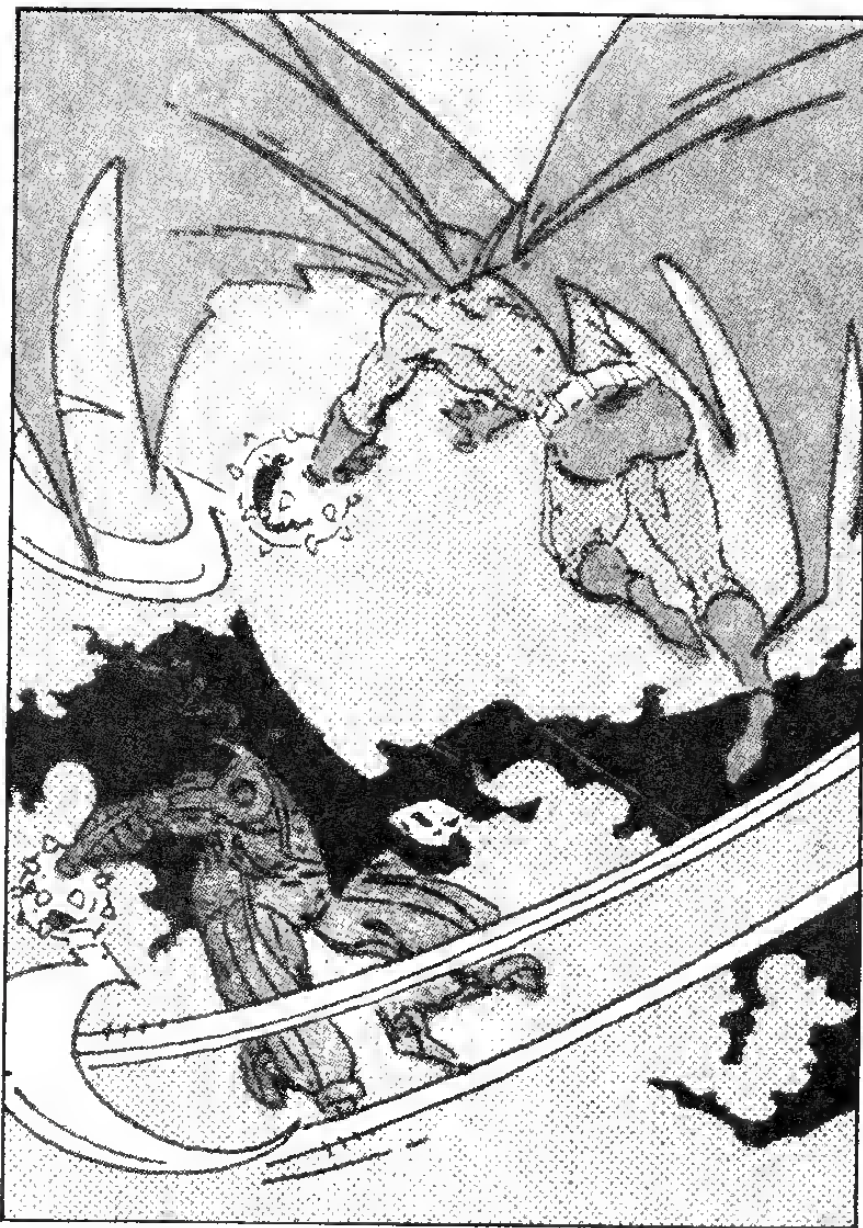
The only way publishers are going to get the hint you guys [meaning fans and readers] are unhappy with titles is for you to stop buying them! If sales change, from 600,000 to 300,000, I guarantee you, they make a change [snaps fingers] right now! People have the power but instead what they do is buy their three copies of *Secret Wars*.

AH: That's a good example, because a lot of people collected it.

McFARLANE: Multiple copies! Many thought it was going to be a hot item! If you're buying comics for investment purpose, then you're adding fuel to the fire. You're keeping sales up.

AH: In other words you're buying not because you want to, but because of the prestige of it as a collector's item.

McFARLANE: And if you're saying it's garbage while collecting 10 copies, all business and editorial people say



Our first view of Todd inking himself appeared in Detective #578, the "Batman: Year Two" story.

"Hey, we put Joe Blow on this book, we sold a million copies! People must like it!" or "Oh, we got some bad mail on it, but they're a minority."

AH: I get a feeling that all of this that we're discussing is because you got feedback from people.

McFARLANE: It's not personal feedback. I don't get too caught up in the fan mail. My attitude about fan mail is: if you're going to write into a book, let's say *Infinity, Inc.*, you're buying the book. 90% are buying it because they like it. In fact, if it was up to me, I hope 100% would like it. If you don't, save your \$2.00 and go buy something else.

AH: You can still be critical and enjoy it.

McFARLANE: I agree with you 100%, but what I'm saying is: if 100 buy *Infinity*, only 10 will write in a letter. And perhaps, only one out of the 10 will write a negative letter.

AH: It seems like you can't take fan mail seriously.

McFARLANE: If I did, it'd be too easy to get a fat head!

I get my judgements from other books, going to conventions, talking to people at conventions, talking to comic book people, reading *Comics Journal*, reading a lot of fanzine stuff [and we hope *Amazing Heroes*, too!]. . . just getting a lot of consensus.

The kids just like the comics. I love the kids because. . .

AH: They're innocent?

McFARLANE: Yes. When I took over *G.I. Joe*, a lot of people were laughing, "Why would you want to do *G.I. Joe*?" Because it's a kid's book. For me, it's a business, more than most people out there. I work my 9-5 job, if I go to a kid, and say "Hi, I'm the artist on *G.I. Joe*," he'll look at me with no response. They're buying *G.I. Joe*.

AH: But they don't care about artists.

McFARLANE: That's right! It's almost soothing on the level that I was able to draw a book and not worry about critical responses.

If I'm stuck on *Infinity* for the next 20 years [He finished on *Infinity* #37,

actually.], and no one gives me any work, that tells me something.

I'm commercial, because I can get the work done and on time. One of the reasons I left DC was because after working with Roy Thomas for two years, I didn't know if anyone else liked me. Being out in Washington, Vancouver, Calgary, I'm in a vacuum. I'm not sure I'm in comics because of Roy Thomas or because I have some kind of talent people wanted.

Hey, you can get a book like *Hulk*, *Spider-Man*, one of the better sellers, and the *Avengers*, I can see that I have something that some people want. I'm just another artist out there, but at least I feel that I have taken the next step after *Infinity* to other things—"a high profile book" I call it. *The Hulk*, and "Batman Year Two," are high profile! The more people see it the better gauge of how people like it. *Infinity* only sold about a 10th of what *Spider-Man* sells.

AH: By getting on high profile comics, you feel you can more accurately gauge people's feelings for your work, then?

McFARLANE: Right. If they like it, I'll concentrate on what they like. If they dislike it, I can have the sense of trying a different style and compensate.

I could have stayed on *Infinity* or gone over to whatever DC comic and still used the *Infinity* style. I could have said to myself, "I don't care if you guys think this is a bad style—or if it's wrong for your book. I'm commercial, *Infinity*'s selling. . . and I can sit out there and let my head grow. Unfortunately, that's what happens to a lot of people in this business. That's why some editors do it their own way [style].

I don't feel that I'm much of an artist that I can draw only one way, and appeal to people in one way.

AH: You want to draw in different ways?

McFARLANE: I don't want to. I like to draw one way but what I'm saying is that if I was drawing in the weird layout style in *Infinity* and I had 100,000 fans, I should be able to, if I had any salt of being a good artist, scrap that style, throw it out the window, and just do 1-2-3 Jack Kirby panels. In a couple of years, [hopefully, I'll] get to the 100,000 people who like me again. If I can't, then I would really consider myself an artist who's locked into one style, one look, and that's all I can give you.

AH: You're hoping to attract your favorite audience in different styles, and not just one, then?

McFARLANE: I'm getting people who look at *Infinity* who like it, but when seeing *The Hulk*, they say this is garbage. That's fine, but it's a



Some worried that Todd's art on Hulk (above from #337) would look like his Infinity, Inc.. He's now left Hulk so he can ink and pencil Amazing Spider-Man.

different style. Look at the *Spider-Man* stuff.

AH: This is your message to the audience.

McFARLANE: [nodding] This is my new pencil and ink style. This is completely me. This is how I draw, regardless of fancy pages—I'll still get wacky here, but not to that extent. I should be able to give you within six months (I have to learn the trades of inking. I haven't done so much; it'll take me a while to feel comfortable), a work you can judge on its own and make a valued decision whether you like it or not. In the new *Spider-Man*, I do the webbing a certain way, I do buildings in a different way.

AH: You have to. It's a different thing altogether. It's got to look different. *Batman's* different because he's *Batman*.

McFARLANE: I don't want to lock into different styles because in this business they'll put a corner on you

so fast: "Oh, he's the weird page layout artist."

AH: You don't want to be labelled.

McFARLANE: [When I say] I feel I'm strongest at drawing things like *Care Bears*, *Strawberry Shortcake*, people give me a sidelong glance. I can draw that stuff easier, faster, better than super-heroes. I don't have to worry about anatomy. It's more fun.

People look at you, especially the hardcore comic people and go "What!? Why do you want to do this?" I get the same reaction for *G.I. Joe*—to them I let them down drawing *G.I. Joe*. I feel every comic books has its moves.

AH: Do you have to catch up with *Spider-Man* when you take it over?

McFARLANE: The writer does. If I was writing it, I'd have to read them all. All I need to know is how short the hair is, just the visuals.

AH: Here's a good question: do you have any aspirations to write?

McFARLANE: A couple of years ago, I would've said no...

AH: As a writer you'd get creative control.

McFARLANE: I think in the future, I'm going to get an itch—and I'll do what I did when I broke into the business; bug all the editors, the writers, and pick their heads for as much information as possible, lock myself into a room and do it. That's actually one of the things I'm looking forward to in the future. To pencil, ink, and write a comic. So I can say, here's my book, here's my name on it.

AH: Without really evaluating likes and dislikes, can you give some comments on working for both DC and Marvel, and their differences?

McFARLANE: I get that question a lot. First of all, sitting out here in Vancouver, with the phone, you're not close to the action—one day the phone rings and it's Marvel and the next day it's DC.

I try not to get too involved. But after spending a year at Marvel, and two at DC, there are differences.

With [Jim] Shooter being dismissed at Marvel, there's a changeover. But at DC they pretty much give you total freedom at the creative end. A lot of people go "That's great" but it also [has a downside]. For two years on *Infinity* I never got a call from other than from Roy Thomas.

No news is good news. I don't know whether the people at the office [at DC] hated [my work] or loved it or if my work even existed.

AH: *So feedback was difficult?*

McFARLANE: I was hungry for feedback at the time, but eventually they did give me feedback.

They give you 100% freedom—almost—which is nice. That's why big guys like Miller go to a big project and they go in a corner, come back and hand in their pages for print.

On a business level, with DC, I felt I had to push and shove a little bit too much. A reason why I left DC.

Marvel on the other hand, doesn't give too much creative freedom, but on a business level, I feel they put their money where their mouth is. DC doesn't. Because they don't it's

sometimes for the better, others it isn't. It gets in the way—you squabble over minor things. It wasn't so bad, but it wears you down.

DC on a business level I'd give an eight out of ten. Creatively, I'd give them a ten. Marvel on a business level is a ten, and creatively an eight. But they both add up to 18.

AH: *Moving on, what were some of the processes of creating new characters in Infinity—you co-created the new Dr. Midnite and Hourman.*

McFARLANE: It depends. Some writers have complete control. Some, like Byrne and Claremont when they did the *X-Men*, are a collaboration. Roy Thomas writes with his wife, so he doesn't need much of a springboard.

But I'm not a writer. I don't tread on their territory. They don't tell me how to draw, so they told me who the character was, what he's all about, and I drew it.

AH: *So you've been responsible for the visible aspects of the creation?*

McFARLANE: Yes. I do maybe five or six costumes, send them in, make a few minor changes, then that's it. On the character level it's the writer and visually it's mine. I pretty much stick to the artistic side.

AH: *A small piece of trivia: is Hourman's mask red or purple?*

McFARLANE: [starts] Oh yeah! Ahh... purple. They kept messing up his boots, the stripes. I must have been unclear. Every time I do a costume design, I also indicate, not specific colors but, if this is black and this is white; most costumes are two or three tones.

I can have six characters, and every time I see [Hourman], the color is slightly different. I kept telling them: this is how I designed it, this is the costume's color, and they finally got it consistent.

AH: *I'd like to get back to children. We were discussing about how they don't care about artists, and only the title. I disagree with that generalization. Because in a local newspaper interview you gave last September, there was a 12-year old kid who was shocked to hear you lived "around the corner" and was dying to get an autograph—he recognized and valued you!*

McFARLANE: Well, okay. This kid was fun, he knew my stuff. He was from Britain. You're right, it's a generalization. It's not giving the kids enough credit.

"—my spider-sense will warn me if there's any danger!" follows—wrong! McFarlane & Michelinie's final clash of the black costumes in *Amazing S-M* #300.



AH: They're more sophisticated than people realize!

McFARLANE: Right. When I was buying comics at 17, I'd go to the corner drugstore and buy them. I didn't have a community that had a comic shop. [Now,] young kids have a chance to hang around their peers. They do have sophistication. I can show you a nine-year old who knows more about naming names than I do.

Kids like characters, but second they like artwork and the creativity aspects. They like *X-Men*. They'd like Art Adams to draw it, but because he isn't drawing it, they can enjoy the comic itself. Even though the guy on it isn't as hot an item as Adams.

The kids like books for what they are and they like to collect names.

AH: Baseball players...

McFARLANE: Yeah!

AH: ...they like trading baseball cards and collecting names!

McFARLANE: Right!

AH: What would you consider your favorite piece of artwork so far—if any?

McFARLANE: I don't know. I'd say actually, right there [motioning to the two issues of *Infinity* on the table]. I've been on *Infinity* for two years and of all the issues I felt #30—the issue where *Infinity* were grieving over the deaths of the Justice Society—I thought the product overall came together. Even the cover was different than anything on the stands that month. The watercolor cover was a dynamite job. The inside I felt Roy wrote a good story and graphically, I was able to pull off some things on it I wanted to. We got a fair response to the issue... people that grieved.

The issue I felt, as a finished product, from beginning to end, was good. I had some highs and lows in other issues, but that was *IT*. Today, I find each job that I do is in some way better than the last one. That's why I'm looking forward so much to the *Spider-Man* penning and inking so I can finally break loose.

Detective Comics "Batman: Year Two," parts two and three that I did, and the penning of part four [I also liked].

AH: I heard about that: part four hasn't come out as we speak, but it's advertised as Alfredo Alcala inking that issue.

McFARLANE: The listing is so far in advance that they didn't get the change.

AH: Then the fourth part, if I'm not mistaken, is a first look at your pen and inks?

McFARLANE: "Batman: Year Two," part four is the first full book I've done pen and ink. Looking back, overall, it's a lot closer to how I draw. It's weird because even me-inking-myself



In comparison Todd McFarlane's cover to *Infinity, Inc.* #26—creating the visual aspects of characters.

I can't pull off some things I put in pencils. I'm still learning inking.

Part four is going to be so radical in style than Alcala's, who gave it a *Swamp Thing*, Marshall Rogers-Batman look. There's a definite change in the book. Some will like Alcala's better and some mine better.

But now I feel I can take better criticism on the one I did. I'm actually looking forward to feedback on that issue so I can continue to do the right things, and fix the others.

AH: Are you happy where you are in terms of the body of your work overall?

McFARLANE: Yes. I can't gripe. I'm doing work on a regular basis. I feel good about my work. I keep repeating this, but I've got a steady paycheck, people in the business who like my stuff, and I feel I got everything except my artwork coming across the page.

[What I was worried about] when quitting *Infinity*, was not knowing whether there were editors out there who'd hire me. Now it's a matter of whether the buying public would like or hate my stuff, or if I'm just one of

fifty comic book artists. That's what it's about. You *can* make a pretty good living at it.

[I'd like to] give the best effort to becoming as big as the big guys, and obviously if I fall short, fine. If I make the top 20, it's pretty good.

If I never make an opportunity to try and get there, I've given it my best shot—I don't do things half-and-half—so this way I'll put myself on the line.

AH: Feel like you're stretching?

McFARLANE: Well, artistically at times, but I'm getting the feedback to see about going to the next level. Maybe I don't have the talent, but I'm on a plateau—I'm going to stay therefore about a year, fine. I want the opportunity to get to the next level and if I can, then I'll guarantee you I'll be fighting for the next level.

I don't think you should ever be happy where you're at. I'm fighting not to be complacent.

I've got to keep expanding. Because if I don't, I'll sit on a plateau. You can do that, but I feel there's more things to try and attain. Everybody has their place and is there for a reason. ●

Ten of a Kind GRUDGE MATCHES!

by Michael J. Cullen

Since the dawn of super-hero comics, it has been with us—the fight scene. Sometimes born of the writer's laziness, it often takes the place of competent storytelling. The outcry of "too many fight scenes in comics" has been heard for years.

The complaint is in protest to mindless head-bashing. Comic book formulas, with a fight every ten pages, have reduced the fight scene in impact. It is an annoyance—a necessary evil to be skimmed and passed over.

Due to this misfortune, we forget that fight scenes need not be entirely negative. When properly used, the fight scene can be an exciting ending to a good story.

What follows is a compendium of such stories. They are grudge matches between arch enemies. What makes them special is not the fight scene itself, but the background and storytelling that lead to them.

They have an intensity which separates them from run-of-the-mill comics. They forever change the relationship between the two characters involved—if indeed both characters survive.

Each of the following stories contains a fight scene.

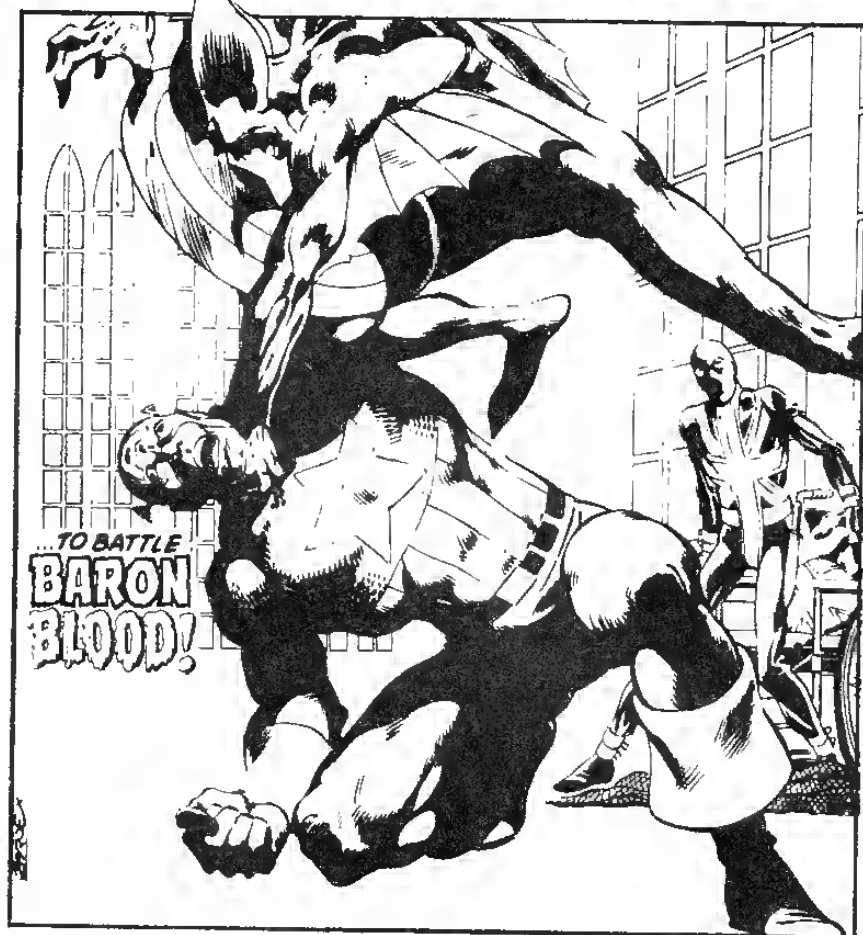
I recommend them all.

10) Captain America vs. Baron Blood—*Captain America* #253-4; co-plotters Roger Stern(writer)/John Byrne(penciler)

Captain America is called to England by the aged Lord Falsworth. During World War II Falsworth fought beside the Captain in the Invaders as the original Union Jack. The old man's small British town is being terrorized by a slasher. Falsworth believes that it's his brother, the vampire Baron Blood who fought on the Axis side during the war.

Cap discovers that the corpse in the supposedly dead Blood's tomb is a fake. Blood is at large.

He figures that there could be no better bait than himself to lure the Baron out of hiding. Sure enough, that night Blood pays him a visit. Cap is ready for him, but the vampire nearly prevails. He hypnotizes the hero and only Cap's chain mail suit



Can you murder the undead? A bloody good question in *Captain America* #254 by Stern and Byrne.

protects him from a deadly bite. Blood escapes as the morning light approaches.

That night, Lord Falsworth dons his Union Jack costume, prepared to do battle with his brother. He suffers a heart attack, forcing him out of action. They lure the Baron back to Falsworth Manor with the dying Lord as bait.

When he arrives, Cap hursts in and tackles the undead creature. The sun is setting and Blood's strength is growing. The battle is quick. Cap catches the vampire by surprise and has him vulnerable. Although it goes against everything he believes, he knows there is only one way to defeat the near-immortal creature, using his indestructible shield, he decapitates his old war enemy. Later, he burns the body and end the vampire's threat permanently.

With the knowledge of his brother's death, Lord Falsworth dies happy, knowing the evil creature will never return.

Noteworthy here is Cap's decision to kill or not to kill. As most super-heroes, Captain America is loathe to kill another living creature. The

World War II stories notwithstanding, the modern day Marvel version of the hero is not a killer.

The encounter with a vampire brings up an interesting choice. It is different from an encounter with say, the Red Skull. When Cap encounters the Skull, he has to weigh the possibility of the Skull going on to commit further murders. When dealing with Blood, the case is different. If you don't kill him, you're making a mistake. This is not a creature who is likely to kill again, this is a creature whose sole source of life is killing. By letting him live, you are, in effect killing somebody else.

This fact makes Cap's decision correct, but its execution (no pun intended) is still a burden on the hero's conscience.

9) Flash vs. Reverse Flash—*Flash* #323-#324; Cary Bates, writer; Carmine Infantino, penciler.

It's Barry Allen's wedding day. he is only hours from marrying the future Fiona Allen.

Suddenly he is contacted by one of the Guardians of the Universe. The news is not good. Barry's nemesis,

the Reverse Flash has escaped his other-dimensional prison.

Barry is distraught. His first wife, Iris, dominates his thoughts. He would still be married to her, had not the Reverse Flash slain her shortly after their marriage.

He vows to recapture the Reverse Flash. It is a job he must do alone.

He finds his sadistic doppelganger in his old house—the one he once shared with Iris. A high speed chase begins.

Meanwhile, at the church, Fiona thinks Barry has backed out of their marriage. Those who know Barry's secret identity think differently.

The battle between Flashes continues around the world. From the Himalayas to Miami sand, "Guess who's going to kill your wife again?" The Flash is enraged. He won't allow it. Not again.

They race to the church. Normally the two possess equal speed, but the Flash has urgency on his side. He overcomes his enemy's lead. Just as the Reverse Flash is about to deliver the fatal blow to an unsuspecting Fiona, the Flash grabs him by the neck, dragging him down from behind and saving Fiona's life. The strain is too much for the villain and he falls, dead of a broken neck.

It's a shock ending, especially when viewed in reference to the Flash's history. Over the years, as one of DC's headline characters, the Scarlet Speedster has encountered and endured a seemingly endless supply of dopey villains. The trite and silly stories which tended to accompany these characters leave a reader unprepared for a hard-hitting tale such as this.

8) Adam Warlock vs. Thanos—*Avenger's Annual #7/Marvel-Two-In-One Annual #2*; Jim Starlin, writer/artist.

Some time before this story, Adam Warlock was forced to track down and defeat his alternate future self, the Magus. To overcome the superior power of his foe, he allied himself with Thanos, the renegade from Titan. At the time, he knew that Thanos was evil, but chose to accept his aid, even though he knew that the titan must have an ulterior motive.

As the story begins, Warlock finds his friend Gamora, dying. With her last breath, she tells him of Thanos' plan to appease Death. The mad Titan wants to destroy all life by extinguishing the stars.

Enlisting the aid of Captain Marvel and the Avengers, Warlock takes off into space to intercept Thanos. They invade one of Thanos' space arks, where they deal with the seemingly endless throngs of the Titan's servants. Warlock finds the dead body of Pip the Troll, another of his friends slain by Thanos. It only serves to enrage him more.

Along with Captain Marvel, Warlock finds Thanos on another ship. The mad god is preparing to carry out his plan of cosmic genocide. A short battle ensues and Thanos slays our hero surprisingly easily.

In one of the strangest scenes in comic history, the dying Warlock meets himself! The Warlock of the past returns to claim the soul of his dying self. Absorbing hero into another world, inside the gem.

Meanwhile, the Avengers destroy Thanos' death ray and with it, his ability to destroy the universe. Thanos

returns to his ship, and with his help, his henchmen defeat the Avengers. He places Earth's heroes in suspended animation.

Removing the soul gem from Warlock's brow, Thanos plans to use it to extinguish our sun. Perhaps that will be enough to appease Death, he thinks.

Once again the battle goes badly. Sensing a need to do something, Spider-Man manages to reach Warlock's soul gem, knocking it from its pedestal.

On impact, from the gem explodes, releasing Warlock's soul. Claiming to be the Ultimate Avenger, Warlock strides toward a terrified Thanos. His touch turns the Titan to solid granite, ending the danger.

Warlock's unusual death and temporary return to life make this story one of the classic grudge matches.

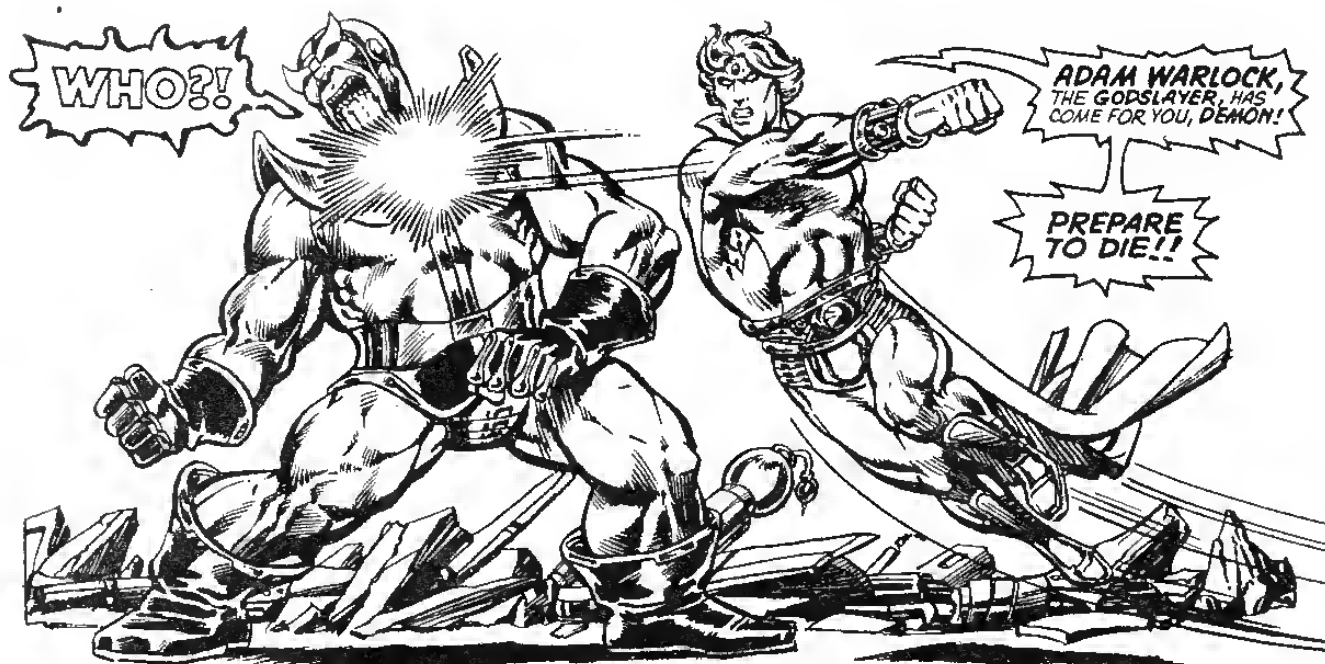
7) Spider-Man vs. The Green Goblin—*Amazing Spider-Man #122*; Gerry Conway, inker; Gil Kane, artist.

Gwen Stacy is dead. The woman Spider-Man loved for so long lies dead in his arms, killed by the Green Goblin, who escapes, leaving Spider-Man frustrated.

As Peter Parker, he looks for leads to the Goblin's location. Knowing the villain's secret identity of Norman Osborn, he hopes to gain information from Osborn's son and Peter's best friend, Harry. Unfortunately, Harry is out of touch with reality, on a drug trip. Peter leaves, despite Harry's pleas for him to stay.

This is a different Spider-Man than the one we know. He is obsessed with revenge. Even his best friend is unim-

No, it's not the good doctor. One of the most unusual grudge match finales, Thanos gets his commupance in Avengers Annual #7 in which Adam Warlock dies, comes back, has his soul released, becomes the Ultimate Avenger, and does Thanos in. From who else but Jim Starlin?



portant compared to finding the Goblin and gaining vengeance.

As Spider-Man, he gets an address to one of Osborn's warehouses from Joe Robertson at the Daily Bugle.

He finds the Goblin in the warehouse. The battle is even until Osborn makes the mistake of mentioning Gwen Stacy. His comment enrages Spider-Man, and he pummels Gwen's murderer unmercifully, stopping just short of the villain's death.

Just as Spidey has spared the Goblin's life, Osborn acts treacherously. He summons his remote-controlled flyer. A look of triumph appears on his face, as his viciously pointed flyer rushes towards the hero's back.

Alerted by his ever-faithful spider-sense, he ducks. The jet powered machine impales its owner, killing him, and ending the threat of the first Green Goblin.

No Spider-Man story before or since has produced the raw emotion present in this battle against his greatest enemy.

6) Reed Richards vs. Doctor Doom—*Fantastic Four* #200; Marv Wolfman, writer; Keith Pollard and Joe Sinnott, artists.

The people at Latveria are revolting (sorry, no joke here). In an attempt to deceive the peasants, Dr. Doom created a clone of himself and planned to name the clone king. The intervention of the Fantastic Four forced Doom to slay his own clone and reveal his treachery to the people of Latveria.

Doom intends to hold power at any cost, and even goes on with a plan to

control the United Nations delegates. While the rest of the team leaves to protect the delegates, Reed stays behind in Latveria to stop Doom there.

The unusual act of splitting up the team sets the stage for one of the longest awaited battles in comics history.

Inside the castle, Reed finds Doom and the fight is on. They battle to a standstill until Doom lures Reed into his Murder Room. Razor sharp steel coils trap him, but his elastic body escapes. Lethal lasers and robots attack him, but he uses them to destroy each other. Doom pumps chlorine gas into the room, but even that is not enough. Richards slithers through the gas tube and into its canister, causing it to explode. Near exhaustion, he resumes his search for Doom.

He finds him in a laboratory, surrounded by the innards of a massive weapon composed of reflective crystals. Using a gadget of his own design, Richards short circuits Doom's armor, rendering its weapons useless. Doom will not quit. Using reserve energy, he activates his refrigeration controls and encases Mr. Fantastic in a block of ice. The ice proves only a minor inconvenience as Reed expands his body and causes the block to explode.

Doom is out of tricks. After two hundred issues and seventeen years, two of the greatest geniuses in the world face off, not with special gadgets, but with their fists. The long awaited clash is as brutal as you would expect. At one point, Mr. Fantastic forms a viciously pointed

mace with his hand, and used it to pummel the dictator.

However, Doom is too strong for him and quickly turns the tables. Only Richards' intelligence saves the day. As the good Doctor is choking the life out of him, Reed removes his mask. The crystal weapon reflects the image of Doom's hideously scarred face from a thousand different directions. The sight of this drives him mad.

Doom is placed in a padded cell as the rebel leader Zorba takes the throne of Latveria.

This is what a two-hundredth issue ought to be—something different. Anyone could have guessed that the anniversary issue would feature Dr. Doom, but writer Marv Wolfman still managed to bring something new to the event.

This tale proves what was only glossed over for most of two-hundred issues. Dr. Doom's arch enemies are not the Fantastic Four. He has only one and it's Reed Richards.

5) Batman vs. The Wrath—*Batman Special* #1; Mike W. Barr, writer; Michael Golden and Mike DeCarlo, artists.

We all know the origin of the Batman. One night, in an area now known as Crime Alley. Bruce Wayne's parents were gunned down in a robbery.

On that same evening, in a different area of Gotham city, another young boy was orphaned—his mother inadvertently killed by a policeman's bullet. This boy lacked the resources of Bruce Wayne. While Bruce grew up in a mansion, this boy grew up on the streets. Bruce grew up to crusade

"The long-awaited fight to the finish!" of Doc Doom and Mr. Fantastic from *Fantastic Four* #200 by Marv Wolfman, Keith Pollard & Joe Sinnott.





In *Batman Special #1* told of a villain who paralleled Batman in most every respect, even origin. A three-Mike book: Barr, Golden and DeCarlo.

against crime, and became the Batman. The other boy grew up fighting his own war—a war against the law. He became the Wrath.

The Wrath wants commissioner Gordon dead. The Batman will not allow it. After the Batman saves the commissioner's life for a second time, the Wrath vows "never again."

The Batman hides Gordon in an out of the way apartment. Unable to find him, the Wrath is forced to try a different approach.

A street punk spills information about the Dark Knight to his enemy. Every year, on every June 26th he visits Crime Alley. This info is put to good use by the Wrath. A simple check of old newspaper files yields more interesting data. he learns of Bruce Wayne's parents' deaths in Crime Alley on that very date. The coincidence is too much. The Wrath concludes that Bruce Wayne must be the Batman.

The next morning is not a good one for Bruce. His parents' gravestones have been smashed. Among the rubble is a note. "Give me C.G." The Wrath wants Gordon.

It doesn't end there. Before he can return to Wayne Manor, his butler Alfred is brutally beaten and hospitalized by the Wrath.

Batman tracks down the Wrath, but he has a hostage, in the person of Leslie Thompkins, the woman who helped Bruce after his parents' death. The Wrath is willing to exchange her for the commissioner. Gordon volunteers for the hazardous switch.

Gordon and the Batman find the Wrath and his hostage on a roof in Crime Alley. After releasing the hostage, he fires two shots into Gordon's chest. Then he turns the weapon on the Batman. The surprisingly alive commissioner spoils his aim and the Batman is free to act.

Gordon, his bullet-proof vest intact, escorts the hostage from the building

as the battle rages on the roof. To the Batman's dismay, his foe is his equal in skill and obsession. He can find no advantage.

The Wrath drops a firebomb on the roof. As the Batman worries about the innocent lives such a fire could threaten, the Wrath about the innocent lives such a fire could threaten, the Wrath takes advantage of his distraction. He grabs the Batman from behind, burying a knife in his ribs. In great pain, the Batman flips the Wrath over his shoulder—farther than he intended. He flies into the fire near the edge of the roof. Seconds later, his burning body hits the pavement. "The Player on the Other Side" (as the story is titled) is defeated.

Batman faces a hero who is his equal in most respects. This premise is not unique, in fact it is present in the previous Flash story. The trick is to tell the story effectively, which Mike Barr does.

The Wrath possesses the Batman's physical ability and his obsession, but not his compassion. The result of this might make the Wrath the better fighter, but it makes the Batman the better man.

4) Wolverine vs. Shingen—*Wolverine* (LS) #1-4; Chris Claremont, writer; Frank Miller, artist.

Having reason to believe that Mariko, the woman he loves is in trouble, Wolverine heads to Japan in order to check on her. He finds her the victim of a political marriage arranged by her father, the crime lord Shingen. Her husband is cruel and physically abuses her. Only Mariko's pleas stop the X-man from killing the wife-beater.

In a surprise attack, Wolverine is poisoned and forced to face Shingen in battle. The poison slows his reactions, and the old man disgraces him in front of Mariko.

Days later, he intervenes in the

attempted assassination of Mariko and her husband. The battle rages until one of the assassins strikes Wolverine a painful blow. He strikes with an animal's fury, destroying the killers in a berserker rage. Unfortunately, Mariko is witness to the hideous battle. She is disgusted with the hero.

After fighting off a horde of assassins, this time sent by Shingen himself, Logan decides to strike back at Shingen and regain his honor. In the days that follow, he systematically destroys parts of the man's criminal empire. Finally, he decides the time

Struttin' his stuff, Wolverine goes after his ladylove's father in his limited series by Chris Claremont and Frank Miller.



is right to face the crime lord once more.

In the course of gaining entry to Shingen's estate, many are killed, including Mariko's evil husband.

He finds Shingen and challenges him. It's a battle of sword versus claws, both combatants duelling with their most proficient weapon. Blood is drawn quickly and often. The brutal grudge match continues until Wolverine is run-through by the crime lord's sword. More than enough to kill most men, the wound only strengthens the X-Man. Holding Shingen's sword with one hand, he gores him with his adamantium claws.

The victory restores Logan's lost honor and redeems him in Mariko's eyes. They become engaged.

More importantly, it marks a turning point in Wolverine's career as an X-Man, for in this story he realizes that he is not an animal, but a man. It is an important step in the change to the tamer, more rational Wolverine who leads the X-Men today.

3) Daredevil vs. Bullseye—*Daredevil* #181; Frank Miller, story and art; Klaus Janson, finished art.

You realize that this story is different right from the beginning. It is narrated by the villain Bullseye. Many months previous, Daredevil had saved the villains' life. In the time between that story and this one, Bullseye was hired as chief assassin by the Kingpin of crime. Daredevil managed to defeat him then and put him in jail.

This story begins in Ryker's Island prison. Bullseye escapes while being interviewed for a news program.

His first move is to look for Elektra, who holds his former job as the Kingpin's chief assassin. He tracks down the ninja and they battle. The fracas ends with Elektra being impaled by her tri-pronged sai. She staggers through the streets of New York, wounded. Stumbling to the front door of Matt Murdock (her former lover; a.k.a. Daredevil), she dies in his arms.

Bullseye seeks re-employment by the Kingpin. The fat man sets one condition on his hiring. He wants Bullseye to bring him Daredevil's body.

He tracks down the man without fear in no time. Daredevil wants a fight as much as Bullseye does. He cannot forget that he saved Bullseye's life and every murder the villain commits is indirectly his fault.

They take to the rooftops in combat. The battle rages through a skylite, out a window and onto a train track. As the train passes, the combatants leap from the elevated track. They both grab a power line and pull themselves to standing positions, suspended by the wire far above the ground.

Daredevil causes the assassin to lose his balance and fall, only to save him by grabbing his hand at the last second. Daredevil had saved Bullseye's life once before and this time the assassin is outraged. He won't allow Daredevil to save him again. Daredevil agrees, letting

Bullseye drop to the pavement below. His body shatters.

2) Swamp Thing vs. Arcane—*Swamp Thing* #31; Alan Moore, writer; Rich Veitch and John Totleben, artists.

The Swamp Thing's arch enemy, Arcane, has possessed the body of Matt Cable. Along with his body, the criminal has the use of Cable's tremendous reality-altering powers.

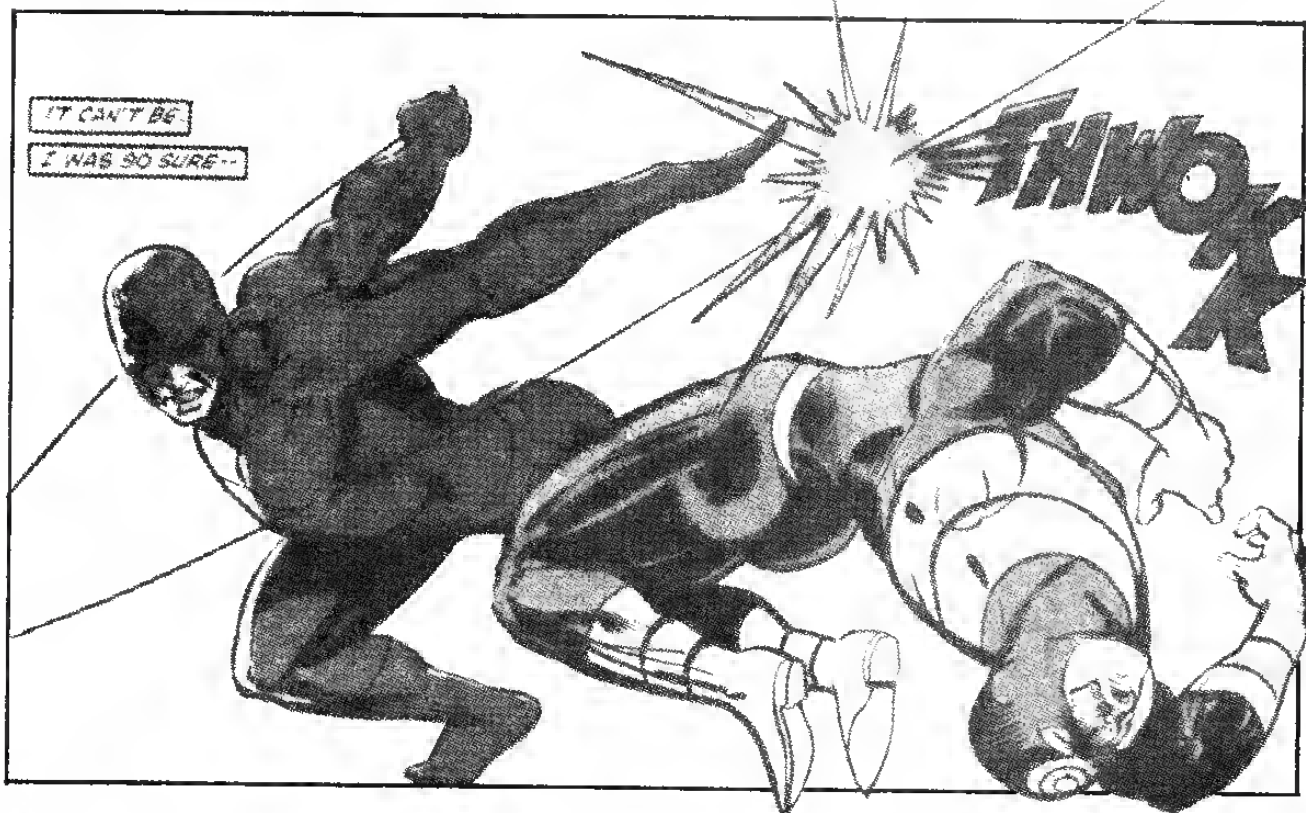


Arcane in the Moore/Veitch/Totleben ST #31.

He has re-animated the dead, liberating from Hell, the souls of society's mass murderers, he plans to return *all* of the evil dead from the grave. He wants to rule the Earth. But most importantly, Arcane has killed his niece and close friend of the Swamp Thing, Abigail Cable.

The story begins with the Swamp Thing fleeing Arcane's home, the dead body of Abby in his arms. Close

The final battle, if there is such a thing in comics, between Daredevil and Bullseye after the latter has impaled Elektra (whatever happened to her?) from DD #181 by Frank Miller and Klaus Janson.



behind is the seemingly omnipotent Arcane, gloating about his final victory over the Swamp Thing. He tries to convince the swamp creature that what he holds is not really Abby, but the Swamp Thing won't be fooled into desecrating her body. It's really her.

Then, the villain reveals that Abby is not just dead, but damned to the pits of Hell, thanks to his powers. The Swamp Thing runs through Arcane's artificial winter, carrying Abby's body over the snow.

He reaches the swamp. Arcane does not notice that his abilities have failed him somewhat. The swamp is resistant to his powers. There is no snow there—only the green of the plants.

He doesn't realize that things are different from their previous meetings. This is not the Swamp Thing he has faced before. This is not Alec Holland. It is an Earth Elemental.

Arcane has made an error, following the Earth Elemental into his domain. Swamp Thing makes him pay for it. He pounds the villain, symbolically smashing him against the Earth, for it is the Earth's power which surges through the swamp creature. Arcane's control over his stolen body falters, and Matt Cable tries to reassert himself.

Meanwhile, Arcane's resurrected followers begin to decompose and die again. Their flesh melts from their bodies.

Matt regains control of his battered body, sending Arcane back to the depths of Hell. The Swamp Thing goes to him, but he is dying. He has enough power to repair one body. He chooses Abby. He repairs her body, but cannot reach her soul before losing out to his wounds.

Still, her body breathes. later, the Swamp Thing would venture to Hell itself to return her stolen soul.

The interesting point in this story is the way Arcane is beaten. The reason for his defeat is, in a sense, mistaken identity. The creature he fights looks like his old foe, but is not quite the enemy he faced before. As the Swamp Thing put, "This is our first battle. This is our final battle."

1) Moon Knight vs. Black Spectre—*Moon Knight* #25; Doug Moench, writer; Bill Sienkiewicz, artist.

Carson Knowles is a war hero who finds things difficult on his return from 'Nam. For years he is abused by the system, until finally, one day his mind snaps.

He vows to avenge himself on the city by becoming Mayor, and destroying it. He decides to pattern his criminal identity on the costume



Badly beaten isn't the word for Moon Knight's condition in issue 25 of his first series against the Black Spectre, written by Doug Moench and Drawn by Bill Sienkiewicz. Of course he triumphs...

of Moon Knight. Thus is born the Black Spectre.

The villain's first outing is a raid of the home of a crooked local politician named Cranston. Arriving as the Black Spectre, he threatens to kill the man if he doesn't support the candidacy of Carson Knowles. To prove his point, he does a dance on Cranston's face.

Moon Knight arrives. He manages to get a look at Knowles, but is surprised at his ability. Black Spectre defeats him and escapes.

Moon Knight returns home, disgusted by his defeat. His girlfriend, Marlene, wants to talk to him about their deteriorating relationship. He can't talk about it now. He's preoccupied.

A television broadcast of a press conference catches his eye. The candidate is Carson Knowles. He immediately recognizes the man on television as Black Spectre.

While he tries to gather information on Knowles, the Black Spectre continues his "campaigning."

He returns home without a scrap of evidence incriminating Knowles. Marlene wants to talk to him again, but he won't talk. It's not until she threatens to leave him that he listens to her. She wants him to take a vacation from being Moon Knight, and to stop his crusade against Carson Knowles.

Moon Knight is certain Knowles is guilty. He asks for her help in proving it. She agrees to infiltrate Knowles's operation, but if he's wrong about the candidate, she's leaving him.

She lands a job as Knowles's personal assistant. She is convinced

that he is clean. Moon Knight is still certain to the contrary.

He calls a press conference of his own, and exposes Knowles to the press as the Black Spectre. Unfortunately, he has no proof, and the conference convinces nobody.

It does, however, cause Knowles to act. Using his weight with the police force, he causes Moon Knight to become a hunted man in police circles.

Wounded by policemen, the hero staggers into his mansion. Marlene is waiting. She is certain that Knowles is innocent. Suitcases in hand, she walks out on him.

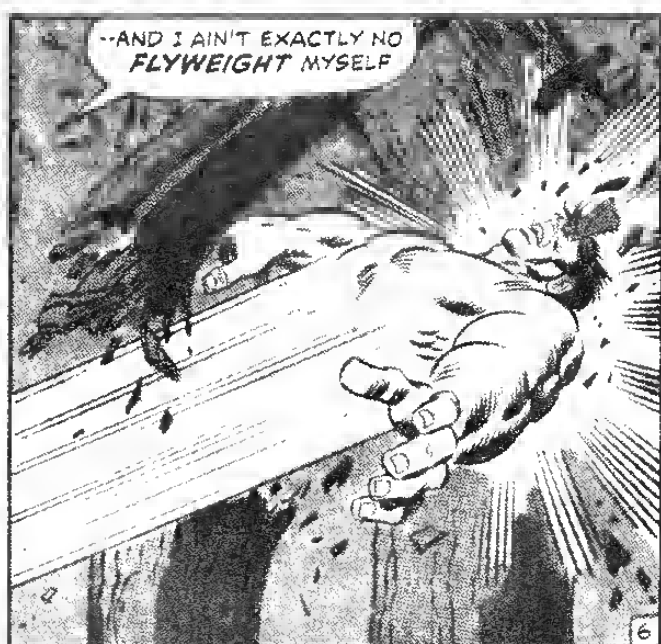
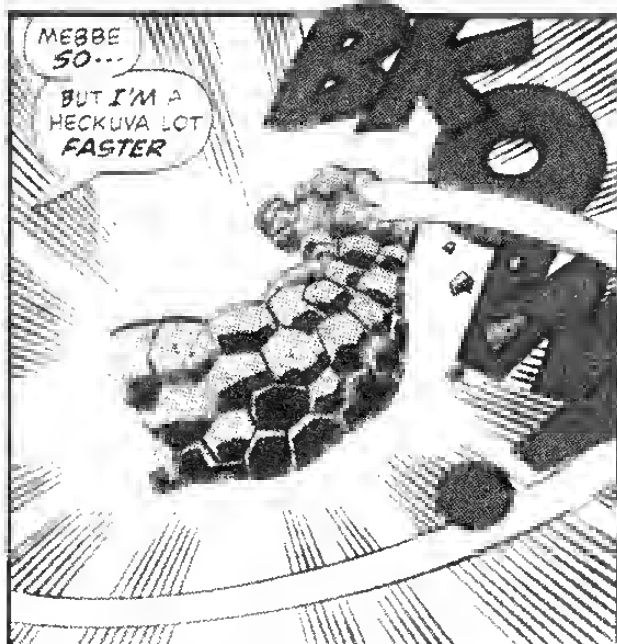
Moon Knight has hit bottom—just as Carson Knowles had. He has been beaten in every way possible, but he isn't giving up. He kneels before his statue of the Moon God, Khonshu, begging desperately for the strength to go on.

Later, Marlene and Knowles are at his headquarters. People line the streets below, cheering for him. While he heads up to the roof for a better view of his adoring public, she goes back to work. While in his office, she finds incriminating evidence against him.

From the roof, Knowles continues to gloat. He sees Moon Knight on the roof of an adjacent building.

Moments later, as Black Spectre, he ambushes the unsuspecting hero. The battle is brief. Black Spectre impales Moon Knight with his sword, leaving him for dead. Perhaps it is willpower, or maybe the divine aid of Khonshu, but something makes Moon Knight get up once more.

He finds Black Spectre in election



Did somebody mention grudge matches? The ever raging question: who's stronger, Thing or Hulk? Address all answers to Coco c/o this magazine.

headquarters. After bloodily dealing with his underlings, he heads for the candidate himself. They plunge from an upper-story window to the street below. Moon Knight unmasks him in front of the stunned crowd. Marlene arrives with documented proof of Knowles's misdeeds. The police cart him away.

Moon Knight and Marlene reconcile, vowing to settle their problems together.

In this story, writer Doug Moench sets out to give Moon Knight something the character has always lacked—an arch enemy. It is a difficult task, to build a villain of such an impressive sort in the space of a single issue, but Moench does it beautifully.

Many of the above mentioned stories gain impact due to repeated use of the villain. The reader already knows him. There is no need to introduce him. The Black Spectre

overcomes the lack of previous exposure and in one story only is established as Moon Knight's greatest foe. It is a shame that *Moon Knight* was cancelled before the villain could appear once more.

What is the point of this list? The goal is two-fold. It is important to realize that in super-hero comics there are always going to be fight scenes. My goal here is to make people realize that not all of them must be boring space-wasters. The misconception that *all* fight scenes are bad should be erased.

A more important goal is the eradication of the reason for this misconception. Why do many people feel that fight scenes are trashy? Because most of them are.

The majority of fight scenes in comics today are gratuitously inserted to supply action. This is a gross underestimation of the general comic readership. People don't enjoy fight scenes. People enjoy good, well-

crafted storytelling. If a fight scene is the logical conclusion to such a story, that's fine.

The above Swamp Thing story is a good example of this. The build-up to the climactic fight scene was three issues of solid storytelling. Inserting a fight scene in either of the first two issues would have been stupid and detracted from the impact of the final encounter.

This is a message to all comic writers: *Don't Underestimate Your Readers*. A little effort can reduce the number of senseless fight scenes dramatically and make the remaining ones better. Make them fit in the framework of the story. Don't make them look like they were inserted, make them belong.

With the comics industry fighting for respectability in the adult entertainment market, a few more well-done fights and a lot less poor ones could make a positive difference in comicdom's future.

THE CAT CAME BACK



by Dale J. Roberts & Wayne R. Smith

Comic books are a predominantly male market. Far more males read comics than do women, and an amazingly small number of females are actually comics creators. Perhaps that's why the vast majority of super-heroines show little evidence of true creative insight and energy. Hawkgirl, Miss America, Supergirl [sniff!], Batgirl, Mera—for the most part, super-heroines have been spin-offs of male characters.

There have been, however, a few exceptions; heroines who did not owe their name, origin, powers, or any aspect of their creation to a male crimefighter: Phantom Lady, Invisible

Girl, The Black Canary—and The Cat.

Categ-Origins

Created in 1972, The Cat debuted in the first issue of her own comic, *The Cat*. Ironically, flying in the face of the aforementioned fact that women are so sparse in the comics industry, two of the creators who worked on the first issue were women, writer Linda Fite and penciller Marie Severin, (though it was the inks by the renowned Wally Wood that make the issue a collector's item). There, we were introduced to Greer Grant Nelson.

Greer had been taken care of all her life, first by her father, then by her husband, policeman Bill Nelson. When Bill was killed in the line of duty, Greer had to learn to be strong, to take care of herself. She tried to get a job in a scientific lab, but no one wanted to hire a woman for such a position. One day, she ran into one of her old college professors, Doctor Joan Tumolo. Tumolo was working on a project that allowed women to tap into the hidden strengths that all humans possess and make them equal to men physically and mentally. She hired her old pupil Greer as her assistant.

The project was funded by one Mal Donalbain, a strange little fellow who possessed severe haphophobia (fear of being touched). Dr. Tumolo soon learned the secret of why Donalbain funded her project; it was the first step in his plan to take over the country by setting up a chain of health resorts which would brainwash women as well as physically enhance them. Donalbain supposedly killed Dr. Tumolo, and Greer, who had been subjected to Tumolo's treatments and had become the superior woman Donalbain envisioned, decided to avenge her mentor. Donning a yellow and blue costume, Greer, as The Cat, battled Donalbain's henchmen—including a lumbering behemoth named Abo—and finally faced down Donalbain. The madman had a gun, but panicked and used it on himself rather than let The Cat touch him with her raking claws. Thus began the career of Greer Nelson—Phase One.

Changing Her Spots

If The Cat did not steal her origin, powers, or name from any male hero, she made up for it by swiping villains from her seasoned male counterparts. In the final three issues of her own title, she battled two old Daredevil nemeses (The Owl and Man-Bull) and a Sub-Mariner foe (Commander Kraken).

In her next and final appearance, as The Cat that is, she finally gained a super-nemesis all her own. *Marvel Team-Up #8* saw Spider-Man and The Cat go two-on-one against the forces of the Man-Killer, a super-feminist gone mad. Man-Killer collapsed into psychological defeat when The Cat revealed to her that her operations had been funded by *men*—the men of A.I.M. (Advanced Idea Mechanics), a criminal organization of super-scientists.

That was in 1973. A year later, The Cat's life changed forever. No longer was she a feminist; she became a sexual extrovert. No longer was she an ordinary super-hero; she became the



That's the last time we invite her to a party! Cat bondage in the first issue of her own title: script by Linda Fite, art by Marie Severin and Wally Wood.

fulfillment of an ancient prophecy. No longer was she human; like The Beast before her, she was a failed hero revamped in light of the Marvel Monster Craze. *Giant-Size Creatures #1* (the semi-last issue of that title: it became *Giant-Size Werewolf By Night* with #2) saw Dr. Tumolo, who had survived Donalbain's assassination attempt, kidnapped by Hydra (another one of those criminal organizations of super-scientists). The Cat tried to rescue her mentor, and for her troubles was shot by a beam of "Alpha Radiation." Dr. Tumolo escaped Hydra then and revealed her true nature to Greer. Tumolo was a member of a hidden race of half-human, half-felines known as the Cat People. Her race had the means to save Greer's life, but to do it they had

to transform her into one of them. Thus The Cat, ordinary super-heroine, became Tigra, the Were-Woman. Her costume now consisted of a simple black bikini, which revealed a quite shapely "female" body covered with orange, black-striped fur. Her claws were no longer mechanical: they were now organic, as were her new fangs. After a battle with the Werewolf, Tigra went off into the sunset, ostensibly to find new popularity as one of Marvel's many monster characters. Too late: this was 1974, and Marvel's Creature Feature had ended.

Fantastic Feline

Tigra's next appearance, then, was two years later. In *Marvel Two-In-One #19*,

Tigra and The Thing battled the Cougar, an evil member of the Cat People who was trying to become super-powerful by using an old weapon that once belonged to Tomazooma, an old enemy of the Fantastic Four. The monstrous duo thwarted the Cougar's plans, when the human woman he had deceived shot him in the back.

Tigra finally began her own series almost immediately afterwards in *Marvel Chillers #3*. This event series was rather anticlimactic, however: nothing important happened to further Tigra's personality or history. She battled a gang of villains called the Rat Pack, and the fantastic Four's old nemesis, the Super-Skrull. Her series in *Marvel Chillers* ended with #7, that title's final issue.

In MT-U #8 Cat's arch villain, the "murderously magnificent gal"—Man-Killer, a mad super-feminist who wore armor and boots! Calling Dr. Ruth!



Tigra's next appearance began a series of marked changes in her psyche. In *Fantastic Four* #176, the three remaining members of the Frightful Four—The Wizard, the Trapster, and the Sandman—captured the Baxter Building and held the Fantastic Four hostage, and placed an advertisement in the *New York Times* asking for applicants for their fourth member. (Many of the rejected applicants have been seen since Texas Twister is a member of the team—that never was, the Rangers, and Captain Ultra appeared with the Defenders.) Tigra, remembering her recent alliance with the Thing, pretended to be a super-villainess and infiltrated the Frightful Four's ranks so that she could free the Fantastic Four, and she remained with the FF for a short time after that. She had begun to come on to the Thing (this was the beginning of her kittenishness, her trademark now), as had Thundra, another FF hanger-on. But by *Fantastic Four* #184, both heroines realized that the Thing's heart belonged to Alicia Masters and left.

Tigra appeared next in *Marvel Team-Up* #67. Apparently Spider-Man did not know she was once The Cat, for he did not mention their previous meeting. Spider-Man on the trail of his old enemy Kraven the Hunter was forced to do battle with Tigra, who was being mentally controlled by Kraven. Spidey soon figured out that the strange collar she was wearing was, keeping her in thrall, so he ripped it off. Tigra, herself once more, explained that she had been on Kraven's trail (she had battled him before in *Marvel Chillers* #4) since he broke jail, but he had captured her. Together they vanquished Kraven.

The Were-Woman was next seen in a comic that hardly lived up to its title: *Marvel Premiere*. The title implies that it was a place for brand-new characters to debut and half the time it was. But it was also a dumping ground for characters who could not hold series of their own characters like Hercules, Satana, the Torpedo and Tigra who showed up in *Marvel Premiere* #42, 1978. In that story, she battled Tabur, one of the New-Men, the were-creatures evolved from lowly animals by the High Evolutionary. Tabur went on a rampage, causing death and destruction. Tigra's old friend and mentor, Dr. Tumolo, gave her life in an attempt to stop him, and Tigra finished the job by devolving Tabur back into a harmless cat.

The Avenger Who Always Landed On Her Feet

Tigra was absent from Marvel Comics for the next three years. In 1981, Tigra



Me-ow... the fur-lined female Tigra, an oversexed hussy who chased anything in pants (tights?).

began a very brief career as a member of Marvel's second-oldest super-team *Avengers* #211 had Captain America making an edict: the Avengers could have no more than six members. At that time, they had eight regulars: Cap, Iron Man, Thor, The Wasp, Vision, Scarlet Witch, Beast, and Wonder Man. Who to choose? Sensing Captain America's dilemma and using her self-appointed "divine right," mental mistress Moondragon summoned a number of heroes to Avengers' Mansion and forced them to battle one another and "try out" for the team. After Moondragon's scheme was discovered, the Avengers forced her out. Most of the heroes she had summoned left, also but two remained: Yellowjacket, who had retired some time before but who had grown tired of being "only a scientist;" and Tigra, who felt as if she had found the place where she belonged. Both joined after the Vision and the Scarlet Witch left to pursue a normal family life, the Beast left to "find himself," and Wonder Man left to get his acting career in order.

Tigra did not play much of a part in the following two issues, which charted Yellowjacket's downfall; and

expulsion; for the most part, she was seen jiggling and throwing innuendos faster than Mae West, Marilyn Monroe, and Madonna combined. In *Avengers* #214, she played her first important role when the Avengers battled the Ghost Rider. After suffering through his horrible Hellfire blast, however, Tigra began to show signs of cowardice. She felt herself unworthy of the title of "Avenger," Captain America tried to reassure her and bolster her confidence, but, in *Avengers* #215-216, her cowardice resurfaced. When the ultra-powerful Molecule Man captured the Avengers and prepared to execute them, Tigra begged shamelessly for her life. As it turned out, she was the one who saved the day by talking the Molecule Man, who was angry at being picked on all his life, out of using his powers for childish revenge purposes. After this adventure, Tigra left the Avengers... for a time.

Here Kitty, Kitty. There Kitty, Kitty. Everywhere Kitty, Kitty.

Tigra next appeared in *Marvel Team-Up* #126, her third appearance in that



A place to hang her scratching post with the West Coast Avengers Tigra, surrounded by males

title counting her appearance as The Cat. In a poignant tale of misplaced affections, Spider-Man put the moves on Tigra because she reminded him of his ex-girlfriend Black Cat, with whom he had just broken up. Meanwhile, Tigra was putting the moves on a policeman named Carl Kronsky, who reminded her of her late husband, and Zabo, Mal Donalbain's humongous henchman from *The Cat* #1, was out to kill Tigra for engineering Donalbain's death. As it turned out, Zabo was Mal Donalbain's brother, and had loved him despite the fact that Mal used him. Spider-Man and Tigra defeated Zabo, and came to realize that they had been unfair in making someone the object of their affections simply because they were reminded of someone else.

Later that year, in *Spider-Woman* #49, Tigra migrated from New York to Los Angeles, only to be attacked by the Locksmith. A vindictive man, The Locksmith was trying to imprison every super-being in L.A. This led into *Spider-Woman* #50, in which Locksmith battled Spider-Woman. Tigra, Gypsy Moth, Daddy Longlegs, Werewolf, and a horde of others. Spider-Woman seemingly died in that

issue, but in truth did not—Tigra and her old comrades, the Avengers, along with Doctor Stange and the Shroud, fought off Spider-Woman's old foe Morgana LeFey and saved her life (though the cost of her spider-powers).

A New Litter Box

In 1984 came the *West Coast Avengers* limited series. The Vision, in *Avengers* #242, had formed the group in order to get the savvy Hawkeye away from New York so that he would not uncover the Vision's plans to take over the world (the vision was under the influence of a control-crystal and a computer linkup at the time). The West Coast Avengers consisted of newlyweds Hawkeye and Mockingbird, Wonder Man, Iron Man (Jim Rhodes), and Tigra. At the beginning of the mini-series, both Wonder Man and Tigra were having doubts about truly belonging to the Avengers; by the end of issue #4, though, after a battle with Graviton, their doubts were dispelled and they elected to stay.

Tigra next appeared in *Avengers* #250, when both teams joined to confront the menace of Maelstrom, a villain from *Marvel Two-In-One*.

However, in the midst of eleven battling heroes, Tigra did not have much of a chance to shine.

In 1985, the West Coast Avengers got their very own continuing Marvel title. *West Coast Avengers* #1 debuted at the same time as the first issue of the twelve-part *Vision and Scarlet Witch* maxi-series; Steve Englehart, writer of both books, had a cross-over between the first two issues of each title. As it happened, the Vision and Wonder Man's brother, the Grim Reaper, was up to his old tricks again, and had enlisted Nekra, Goliath, Black Talon, Man-Ape, and Ultron-XII the aid of Tigra did not play an extremely large role in those overcrowded issues, but she began to see the spotlight with *WCA* #3. In that issue, Tigra battled her perennial foe, Kraven the Hunter for the third time. Thus began Englehart's exploration of what the cat-side of her personality was doing to her. She was starting to act like a cat. When attacked, she fought back, savagely. Throughout the next couple of issues of *WCA*, readers began to see another aspect of Tigra's cat-like actions: apparently, she was in heat. She came on to both Wonder Man and Henry Pym, and probably would have seduced Hawkeye had he not been married. Lord only knows why she didn't go after Iron Man; maybe she figured it would be too much trouble to get his armor off of him. In *West Coast Avengers* #6, after constantly being torn between her cat side, who lives only for pleasure, and her human side, who feels tremendous guilt, Tigra and her teammates journeyed to the land of the Cat-

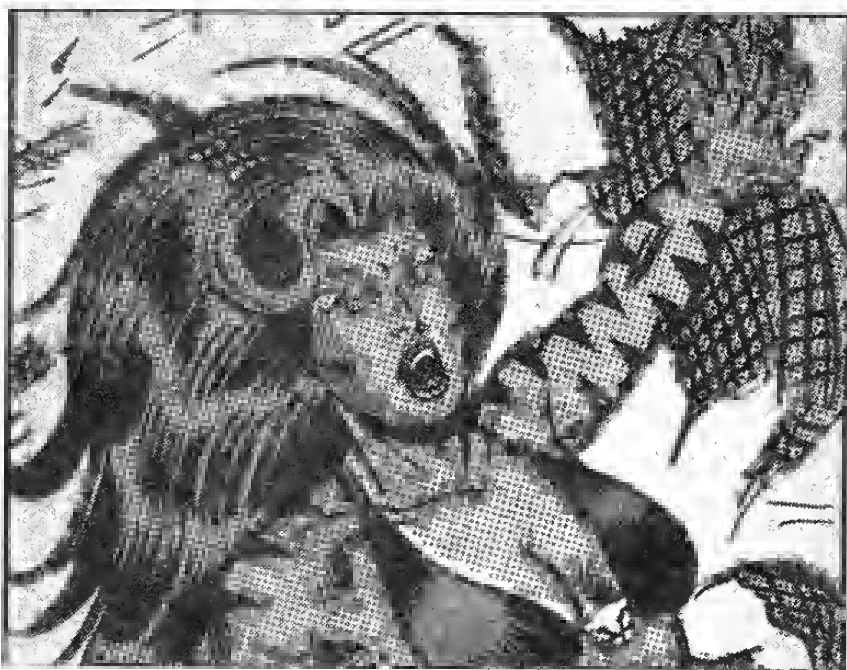
... she does what comes naturally when she's in heat, going after Wonder Man (below). But she settled down, believing it's not right to litter.



People to ask them to exercise the cat-soul from her. Unknown to the other WCAers, the king of the cat-people struck a pact with Tigra and promised to cure her if she would kill a supervillain known as Master Pandemonium, who had been giving the Cat-People trouble. At this writing, Tigra has (again unknown to her comrades) attempted to kill Pandemonium, but failed. Whether she will, and thus lose her powers, remains to be seen.

Eight Lives Down?

There you have it: the ups and downs history of the Greer Nelson, a.k.a. Cat, a.k.a. Tigra, a.k.a. The Were-Woman, a.k.a. . . . ? Like the Beast, she was a washed-up super-hero turned into something more than human as a result of the Marvel Monster Period. Whereas the Beast has gone on to phenomenal success as a member of the Avengers, the Defenders, and X-Factor, and eventually lost his monsterish appearance, Tigra has not achieved nearly so much fame and exposure, and remains the Were-Woman. But now that she has found a home in the West Coast Avengers, who's to say what will become of her? It's a thought that gives one paws.



TIGRA CHECKLIST

As The Cat:

The Cat #1-4

Giant-Size Creatures #1

Marvel Team-Up #8

As Tigra:

The Avengers #'s 211-216, 240-1, 250

Fantastic Four #'s 177-179, 181-184

Giant-Size Creatures #1

Marvel Chillers #'s 3-17

Marvel Premiere #42

Marvel Team-Up #67, 126

Marvel Two-In-One #19

Spider-Woman #'s 49, 50

The Vision and the Scarlet Witch (vol. 2) #1, 2

The West Coast Avengers (LS) #'s 1-up

The West Coast Avengers #'s 1-up

[NOTE: *The Cat* #1 was reprinted in *The Superhero Women*, a deluxe reprint book.]

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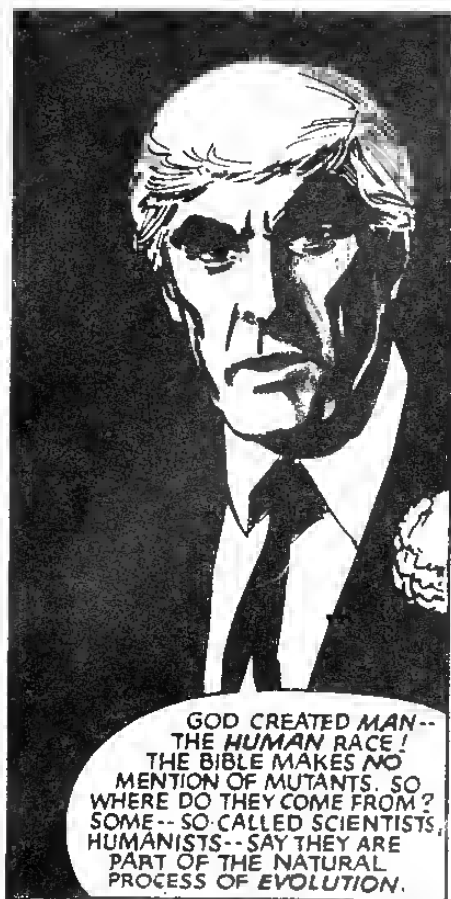
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from Thoughts and Images:
in April



SUPPOSE THEY GAVE A WITCH-HUNT... & NOBODY CAME?

DOC'S Bookshelf

by Dwight R. Decker

Comic books have never really recovered from the crash of the '50s. The scars left by a nationwide—no, *worldwide!*—crusade against comic books, Senate hearings, and the desperate attempt to form a self-censorship body before outside agencies imposed one have never entirely healed.

What's more, comic fans come into the field with vivid memories of parents and teachers forcibly taking comic books away from them or at least expressing contempt and loathing for the entire medium in no uncertain terms. When fans learn what happened in the '50s and why so many mainstream comic books carry that little Comics Code Authority trading stamp on the cover, they start to fret and nervously wonder whether *It Could Happen Again*.

In the last year or two, with the Meese Commission taking off after pornography, creationists challenging the teaching of evolution in public schools, and fundamentalists banning *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, it was perhaps only natural that comics fans and pro-

fessionals might worry that comic books were next on the hit list.

Well, maybe it was only natural, but look what it led to. Some of the most pompously self-righteous editorials ever written adorning the columns of the independent comic books. Letter columns in issue after issue of the *Comics Buyer's Guide* moaning and groaning about all the things the Forces of Darkness were going to do to us once they had finished censoring rock music lyrics. DC's hasty and ill-conceived self-rating system that led to instant mutiny by several of its best-selling creators. The whole brouhaha may have botched out when *Comics Interview* #43 appeared with a stark black and white cover screaming in huge type: "Will YOUR favorite comics be BANNED?" You almost expect the next knock at your door to be Jerry Falwell, coming to take your comic books away. Anyway, the answer to the question is a simple "No."

There are a number of reasons. Let's take the alleged historical parallels first. This isn't the 1950s. At that time, comic books cost only a dime apiece and sold in the umpteen millions. As early as his article in the May 29, 1948 issue of *Saturday Review*, Dr. Fredric Wertham was claiming that "the children are bombarded with at least sixty million comic books a month. That is seven hundred and twenty million of them a year." I don't know if his figures were accurate, but he was able to state with some confidence that "comic

books are the greatest book publishing success in history and the greatest mass influence on children. If I make the most conservative estimate from my own researches, one billion times a year a child sits down with a comic book. Crime does not pay, but crime comics do."

That was forty years ago. There was no television to speak of and every child read comic books. If it could be proven that something was wrong with comic books, of course people would get upset. However, this is the '80s. Comic books are vastly more expensive and have vastly smaller circulations. Comic books appeal to an older audience, if only because children can't afford them. One of the long-term problems facing comic-book publishers today is getting pre-teens interested in comics to begin with, which was the whole point behind Marvel's Star Comics venture. Comic books are not the universal children's medium they were forty years ago, and even if someone could prove they were vile hotbeds of degeneracy, the revelation would upset relatively few households today.

Social problems have changed, too. In Wertham's day, the buzzword on everyone's mind was "juvenile delinquency," and showing that comic books helped cause it made him a media star in his own right. We still have disaffected youth today, and kids who get into trouble, but as a concept the term "juvenile delinquency" seems quaint and dated and, thanks



The X-Men pin-up Jerry Falwell supposedly spoke of? From X-Men #130 by Claremont/Byrne/Austin.

to the Fonz, maybe even a little cute. If any one thing gets the blame for youth problems of the '80s like drug use or the consequences of casual sex, it's probably rock music. Trying to blame comic books would just produce a horselaugh from all within earshot—not enough kids read the things these days. Unlike the '50s, there is no sweeping social problem in the '80s that comic books can conveniently be blamed for. In fact, for one problem afflicting children these days—illiteracy, or at least a lack of interest in any sort of reading—comic books might even be considered a positive *benefit*.

What's more, also unlike the '50s, most parents today grew up reading comic books themselves. They know what they are and they aren't afraid of them. If Reverend Billy Bob got up and accused comic books of being Satanist or perverse, most people would just laugh at him like they did at that one minister who found something upsetting in the lyrics to the *Mr. Ed* theme song. They know comic books too well to take something like that seriously. Besides, in the larger scheme of things and despite our feelings of self-importance, comic books are about on that level of trivia. Anyone wanting to campaign against sins and abominations in popular culture would do better to inveigh against TV and

movies. *Everybody* watches TV and movies. Ever since television rooted itself in American homes going on forty years ago, comic books have become more and more a minor backwater of the entertainment industry, too minor for anyone to bother with.

A further point that doomsaying fans and professionals keep failing to consider is *why* the Forces of Darkness are supposed to be interested in comic books to begin with. What triggered the anti-comics crusade of the '50s was a wave of violent comic books. I mean *violent*. Blood, severed body parts, wholesale murder, gruesome horror—splatter movies on paper. People today forget that pre-Code crime and horror comic books were every bit as ghastly as Dr. Wertham said they were; all he had to do was point to them and say, "See?!" and any parent, teacher, and legislator could verify it for themselves. What makes Wertham's story so bizarre is that he *still* felt compelled to overstate his case, but he really didn't have to. Now consider the times. This was the early '50s. Explicitly gory horror movies like today's were unknown. Gynecologically explicit photographs of women spreading their legs for the camera and printed in full-color on high-gloss paper were not available on every newsstand; even simple line drawings of girls posed coyly in lingerie were

thought to be outrageously "suggestive" and too much for young minds to handle. Now consider that this stuff, by the standards of that era equivalent to the hardest-core pornography, was being published by the boxcar-load in *comic books*, which everyone thought of as exclusively children's literature and which every child in the country was reading avidly.

Look around at the comic books being published today, and consider what else is going on in entertainment. Are comic books gorier than splatter films? Are they sexually riper than *Hustler*, a magazine any 15-year-old who cares to can get his hands on? For that matter, can mere drawings compete with full-color photographs? The bottom line is that despite the misgivings retailers sometimes have about selling a scattered few individual titles that seem to go a little too far, comic books overall are almost surprisingly tame. The *entire* industry would have to be sinking into the depths of depravity to attract hostile fire from outside, and even then comics would really have to work at it to outdo the movies.

This isn't to say that there might not be trouble on the local level. Communities very widely around the country in regard to what will be tolerated, and individual comic books might cause problems if a retailer misjudges local feelings and sells the wrong book to the local kid. The best-known case of that happening is that of Friendly Frank's comic shop in Lansing, Illinois, busted by city police for allegedly selling pornography. The list of "obscene" comic books cited in the city's complaint against Friendly Frank's would be laughable except for the grief it has caused shop owner Frank Mangiarcina. It is difficult at this point to see how Lansing can hope to win such a weak case. It has been suggested that the obscenity angle was merely a handy pretext for the city of Lansing to run out of town a business it considered undesirable. In any event, the case has drawn wide attention in the fan press precisely because it *is* a fluke. It is not the harbinger of a nation-wide anti-comics crusade even if fretting publishers write in overheated editorials that "stores are being closed. Books are being pulled from the shelves. Comics retailers are becoming scared." (David Campiti in *Terraformers* #2.)

If a nationwide crusade like that of the '50s was gathering force, *you* would know about it. You would have heard about it. There would be articles about how awful comic books are appearing in major magazines. Teachers, parents, and legislators

would be organizing to combat the comic-book menace. There would be Senate sub-committee hearings. If it was the '50s all over again, it would have been Dick Giordano or Tom DeFalco in the Senate hot seat this past summer, as William Gaines once was, not Ollie North. Ambitious senators would have been trying to make a name for themselves by attacking comic books, like Senator Kefauver did back in the '50s, not defeating Judge Bork. And in every school in the land, kids would be enlisted in a "Say 'NO' to Comic Books" campaign, either in addition to or instead of the actual one involving drugs. Is the example overdrawn? Ponder this incident cited approvingly by Dr. Wertham in his 1948 article: "... In a Chicago school recently, the pupils collected and burned all the comic books and then went around in groups and persuaded the dealers in that neighborhood not to handle them any more. Other schools in Chicago followed their example." Seven years later, the February 27, 1955 edition of the *New York Times* ran a story about an American Auxiliary branch in Norwich, Connecticut conducting a drive to trade "good books" to local children for their comics. That made the news partly because the good ladies of the American Legion Auxiliary, unsure what else to do with the 5,000 comics they had collected as a result, decided to burn them—and the American Civil Liberties Union immediately sensed Ominous Parallels and issued a statement denouncing the reported plans to burn comic books as "an imitation of totalitarian dictatorship that is wholly contrary to the American way of life."

Despite the anguished editorials appearing in the fan and professional comics press, things like that simply aren't happening. If they were we would be hearing about it. And we aren't.

But they're out there, aren't they, plotting to comic books in? All right, *who's* out there? Why the right-wing fundamentalists, the same ones who banned *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*? Right?

Probably the people most surprised to hear all this would be the right-wing fundamentalists. *The Comics Journal* #115 ran an account of a broadcast of Harlan Ellison's Los Angeles radio talk show, *Hour 25*, on which Ellison, Frank Miller, Mark Evanier, and Marv Wolfman discussed comics censorship and DC's proposed rating system. Evanier presented a knowledgeable account of what happened in the '50s, but Ellison and Miller seemed to be trying to one-up each other with unfounded scare stories. Quoting from *T CJ* #115:



Turn him into an fundamentalist or a paranoid comic fan. The wicked witch of the South from Eric Shanower's *The Enchanted Apples of Oz*. Breaking Biblical tenets of violating freedom of religion?

"Ellison referred to a *Publisher's Weekly* article that quoted publisher Lyle Stuart, former colleague of Bill Gaines, as saying that in April 1954, the U.S. Senate subcommittee investigating juvenile delinquency declared that 98 percent of all comic book publishers were communists." (The *New York Times* missed that story; the only comparable item it lists in its index for April, 1954 is Senator Estes Kefauver charging that three experts on the staff of the Child Study Association were actually in the pay of the comic-book publishers and their reports minimized the problem. However, the month before, real Communists in Berlin were burning *Donald Duck* comics.) Miller came back by saying that "he had heard reports that Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and Jimmy Swaggart had been 'thrashing about a lot lately... trying to invent enemies...' Falwell in particular remarked that Marvel Comics was running nude pin-ups of the characters in the monthly *X-Men* comic, which is plainly untrue... and Swaggart's statement I found so incomprehensible, I can't even remember it!"

If anyone reading this can verify what Falwell or even Swaggart actually said, we at *Amazing Heroes* would appreciate hearing about it. The story that Falwell attacked the *X-Men* somewhere has had fans and professionals buzzing for months but no one

seems to be able to come up with any *hard* information as to where he did it and exactly what was said.

Even if Falwell did condemn the *X-Men* (which at this point I rather tend to doubt), would anyone listen to him? The TV preachers as a group have hardly covered themselves with glory in the past several months, after all. What's more, Falwell himself stepped down as head of the Moral Majority on November 3, 1987, saying he was leaving the political arena to concentrate on his ministry. The surprise was that the Moral Majority was still a going concern, as almost nothing has been heard from it in several years (other than Falwell admitting that some of the money contributed to it had been siphoned off for his church).

Another surprise is that Frank Miller was so concerned about the menace of right-wing fundamentalists when the most vituperative criticisms of his work—that there's a fascist "subtext" apparent in *Dark Knight* obvious to anyone who knows how to look—have come from the left.

The bottom line was that Falwell didn't have to say or do anything. He has become enough of a larger-than-life bogeyman that the mere mention of his name frightened DC into drafting a set of guidelines for mainly public relations purposes in case the heat was really turned on, which in turn infuriated Miller, Alan Moore,



A parent decided Elfquest had pointy-eared demons: but what about the Bacchanalia? (Above #17)

Howard Chaykin and Marv Wolfman enough to make them walk out. Not bad when you consider that it was probably all just a rumor to begin with and Falwell would have been the most astonished of anyone to hear about it.

Moreover, the picture Miller paints of scheming evangelists is a little odd. You can imagine them in a motel room somewhere cynically plotting strategy together. "We're losing influence! What innocent victims can we attack to stir up the rabble?" "How about comic books? They won't fight back!" Did someone take minutes of the meeting and leak the Protocols of the Learned Elders of TV Evangelism to Miller? Do real people in the real world operate with such cool calculation? Besides, Swaggart is as opposed to Falwell as he is to evolution, Robertson is kind of busy running for President, and Falwell, who supports Bush, has let the Moral Majority fade into obscurity over the past couple of years. Well, perhaps Miller didn't mean to imply that they were really acting in concert, but the whole thing seems to be half rumor and half wild speculation based on the assumption that the religious Right can be accused of virtually any heinous act or motive with a good chance of it actually being true.

But how did the Right-Wing Fundamentalists (RWF's) get into the picture, anyway? Why do fans and professionals look at them in particular as the source of imminent trouble when the hard evidence for them being up to mischief in the comics field is up to now pretty slim? Part of it could be that most comics fans and professionals, so far as they can be related to anything going on in the real world, are political liberals with

no sympathy for the starboard side of the spectrum, and would be almost eager to believe the worst of RWF's. Then, too, Jerry Falwell makes a wonderful villain in the liberal demonology: he's almost a comic-book caricature of an oily, demagogic Southern preacher come to life. The main reason, however, is that RWF's have been in the news for trying to have certain books removed from school curricula in some places for ideological reasons, and somehow the conclusion is reached that comic books are "next." Alan Moore even heard about it in Britain, moving him to write in the February 13, 1987 issue of *Comic Buyer's Guide* (and reprinted in *The Comics Journal* #117) that by its failure to speak out against censorship masking itself as moral decency or christian virtue, "your nation has allowed itself to reach a situation where 'moral' and 'Christian' pressure groups can force the removal of *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* from the school library shelves. . . I believe that the moral pressure groups that everyone feels we should censor ourselves as protection from are dangerous and in my terms at least, actually evil. There is only one group which would ever call for the banning of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and I don't care what they happen to be calling themselves these days." I would be curious to know what Moore thinks of the radical leftists in his own country who have gained control of a few London city school districts and immediately thrown out books like *Robinson Crusoe* (because it was "racist" and "imperialist") and even *Peter Rabbit* because he's too much of a "middle-class" rabbit),

but let that pass.

The thing is, almost no one has gotten the *Oz* and *Anne Frank* story right. Moore and *CBG* editors Don and Maggie Thompson sounded ready to believe there's some sort of active Nazi movement in our midst, while fans in general seem convinced that RWF's actually banned those books. The actual story is quite a bit different and a little pathetic.

A Tennessee housewife and mother named Vicki Frost, inspired by an unusually narrow and restrictive form of Christianity that rejects just about all "worldly" things, sued her local school district to keep the schools from forcing books she considered ungodly on her children. Her objection to *The Wizard of Oz* was that it had witches in it, and good ones at that, when the Biblical injunction is that thou shalt not suffer a witch to live because witches are evil. She didn't like *The Diary of Anne Frank* because of an obscure passage suggesting that no one religion is the best and any or all may do, and in Frost's view, there can be only one religion. She was not suing to ban the books, nor were the books banned; she wanted her kids to be able to leave the classroom whenever irreligious books were discussed and have separate instruction. Her beef wasn't with free expression or freedom of the press, but with compulsory education (after all, somebody has to decide what shall be taught, and how does a democracy accommodate the rights of minority religious or political sects?). and what she probably really needed was a private school. However, she had no media savvy and was given to making outrageous-sounding statements that the media picked up on and reported gleefully. What got back to the comics field was considerably distorted, as it turned out.

In any case, the struggle over what goes into a school library is a political argument over which gang has the right to inflict its view of the world on children required by law to sit in a classroom and listen. It doesn't have much to do with comic books at all. Vicki Frost's kids probably weren't allowed to read them anyway, and even though Richard Pini recently quoted some of Frost's more bizarre thoughts with fear and loathing in his editorial for *WaRP/Apple Comics* recently, and was ready to name her "the new master of horror" ahead of Stephen King, she isn't even out to take other people's comic books away. The Frost case, which last report she lost, may make a good horrible example, but it's really irrelevant. A Frost victory might have actually been a victory for freedom of religion and a defeat for govern-

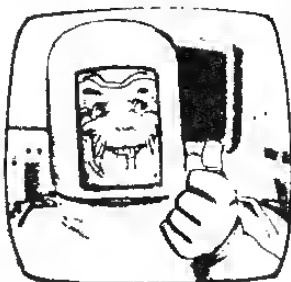
ment-imposed conformity of thought dictated by compulsory education, if you care to look at it that way.

Pini can be forgiven for looking askance at RWF's, considering what he's had to put up with. An issue of *Elfquest* a while back ran a sad letter from a boy whose mother wouldn't let him read the book. She had seen the pointed ears on the characters and decided *Elfquest* was "demonistic".

Through all the hysteria, did anyone react with common sense? Cat Yronwode's editorial in the January, 1987 issues of *Eclipse Comics* listed a number of good reasons why "actually, nobody is after any of us, and, aside from the usual, occasional 'parental outrage' story on some local television show, nothing at all is happening to lead me to believe that comics are due for any special form of attack." As she pointed out, if anything like that was brewing, we would have heard about it. Unfortunately, just about everyone else in the field was whooping and heaving for months about the Right-Wing Fundamentalists and their evil designs against us. . . thirty-five years ago, we might have been blaming the Communists as the shadowy, all-powerful Forces of Darkness spinning plots against us.

As I wind this up, something has occurred to me. Is anything like what

WELL, FOLKS, I'VE GOT
SOME GOOD NEWS --
AND SOME BAD NEWS...
HEH... THE GOOD NEWS IS
THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE
WITHDRAWN THEIR FORCES
FROM THE ISLAND OF
CORIO MALTESE...



Who criticizes Dark Knight—the left or the right?

happened to comic books in the '50s happening again today? The answer to that question is yes, but not to comic books. Remember, Dr. Wertham was not a Right-Wing Fundamentalist; he was a political liberal, and his criticism of comic books was that they were a form of socially irresponsible Big Business run amuck. Comic books were not a form of art or literature entitled to First Amendment protection but merely a businessman's product, subject to regulation like food to keep unhealthy varieties from poisoning consumers. The establishment intellectuals of the

day either agreed with him or didn't think comic books were important enough to defend. Today, cartoon shows on TV that are little more than extended commercials for lines of toys are under attack for similar reasons. The loudest group condemning them, Action for Children's Television, is hardly a band of Right-Wing Fundamentalists; one of its gripes is that such shows promote "militarism." There may well be regulation sooner or later to limit or control such programs. As far as that goes, the critics are right: the shows are half-hour toy ads. Like in the '50s with comic books, they're so obviously just coldly conceived products that almost no one wants to stand up and defend them. That's where the parallels with the '50s are.

But a new witch-hunt against comic books? Get out of the city, comics fans and professionals! You're not that important, no matter what you think.

Anyway, if some preacher did take off after comics, the publicity would probably do us some good. ●

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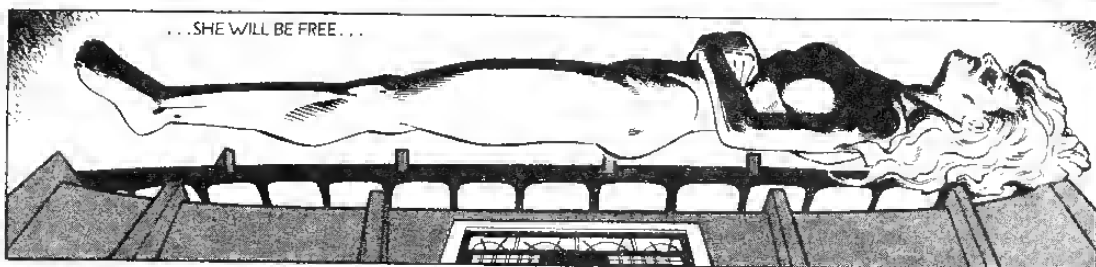
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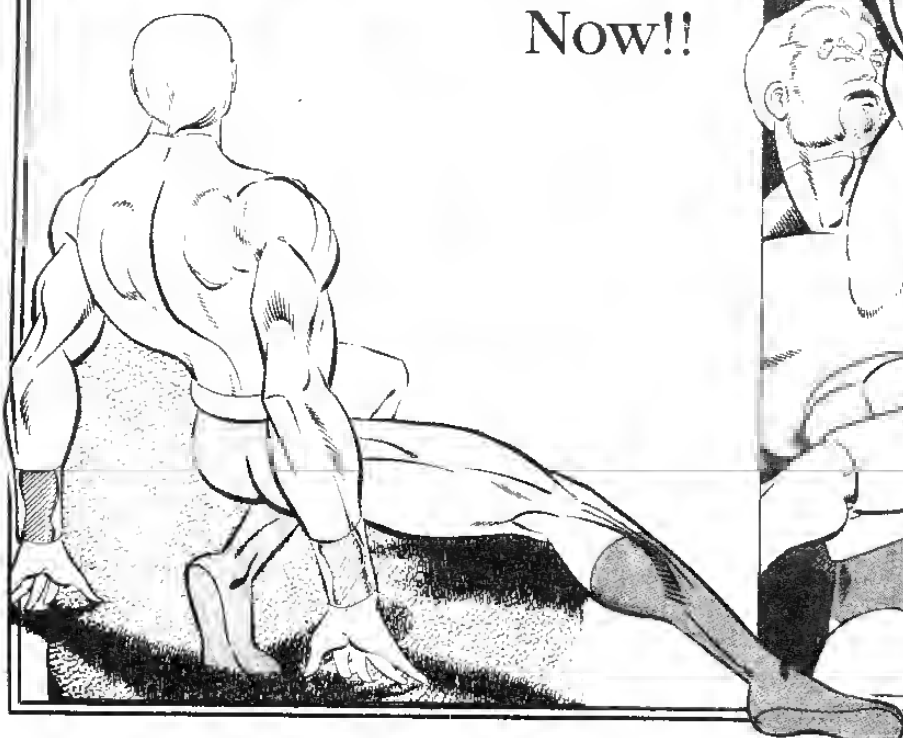
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COMICS

in review

WHY I DON'T LIKE THE NEW WONDER WOMAN

by Lawrence H. Burdick

Wonder Woman: The name inspires visions of Dr. Moulton's creation. The valiant female of the old Justice Society, and that of the contemporary one of the Silver Age Justice League of America; both women who set out to prove to the world of Man that Woman had her place in what was undeniably a Male-dominated society. She is the Amazon Princess born of the clay of Paradise Island which lies hidden in the folds of the Bermuda Triangle; the island with an all-woman population whose achievements in society cause our world to pale in comparison. In both the old and contemporary versions she is a woman torn by her duty to the world and her love for U.S. Air Force Colonel Steve Trevor.

Well, so what else is new?

Sadly enough, that was my reaction to the first issue of the "New" Wonder Woman by Greg Potter, George Perez, et al. And, in point of fact, it has more or less continued to be my reaction, despite the hard work and high quality that has gone into the magazine. Why? Because of the fact that nothing has really *changed* for Wonder Woman! Oh, Queen Hippolyte's hair is back to the Golden Age color; Paradise Island has a serpent in its bowels; Wonder Woman's bracelets are now a silvery color; and her amour, Steve Trevor, is now a veteran of the Vietnam War. But the central core of the plot is still the tired old 'gods messing up the lives of the lesser mortals'; the same way it has been for forty years! And frankly, I'm getting tired of it.

Mind you, I'm not saying there hasn't been some genuine effort put into this magazine. By far, there has been. Perez' artwork is undeniably some of the best in the business. The story clicks together much more smoothly than did the Golden and Silver Age versions. I marveled at the reason for the Amazon's existence, which before, had been murky at best.

But beyond the ringlets in her hair, and the cutesy naivety of her coping in the outside world, nothing has really changed about Diana. Her antagonists are still characters plucked from Bullfinch's Mythology, and they have only that anchor to our world. And it is just that same "less than modern" touch that is fouling my liking Wonder Woman; and defiling her chance at a long life. I could care

less about the plots of Ares and his spoiled little sons. Oh! they looked better in Perez' renderings than they have in years, but they remain creatures of mythology rather than foes of the real world.

It's not that I don't have an appreciation for the Classics, or for Greek Mythology. Far from it! I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the California State University system. I am well-versed in Plato, Shakespeare, Mark Twain, and especially the Greek Classics; from Ovid to Socrates. I know and understand all the footwork that the scriptwriters covered, and I admire their handiwork in fitting in the Amazons to the world of the Greek mythos. What bothers me is that there is very little elemental truth behind the Amazons to support the existence of their champion.

What do I mean? Take Homer's *Illiad* for instance: we know from Homer's tales and poems of the Trojan

War and the fall of the city of Troy. Readers have liked the story for centuries, but it was always assumed that it was just that, a story. But in 1870, Henrich Schliemann found the city of Troy via excavations at the described sites, and from his own research. Thus, historians now accept that the *Illiad* contains elements of truth in it; if not historical fact.

Or DC's own *Omega Men*, for instance. The late comic describes the exploits of life forms on 22 planets in the Vega star system. Recent astronomical data indicates that there are unknown bodies orbiting Vega that may indeed be planets.

You get my point, I'm sure. For every story, however fantastic, there must be some minor truths to it, to assure a consistent body of logic. Wonder Woman and her fellow Amazons have only myths to back their existence up, and myths are really nothing more than exaggerated lies. And it is this crucial weakening

factor that stops my interest from becoming actual liking.

Even the very concepts of her background are based on Romanticism rather than realism. The matriarchial society of the Amazons is interesting, I'll admit, but there are some implications that are patently ignored: specifically lesbianism. Thousands of women living together over successive centuries would inevitably lead to some degree of homosexuality, as there are certain feelings and frustrations that can be relieved only by sex. A lack of males would not stop these feelings, and substitution of objects of affection would immediately follow. After all, the sexual desire is second in the human nervous system only to the need for food.

If we are to accept that Wonder Woman has emerged from a monosexual society, then she must also carry the social customs and requisites that are inherent to such a society. It is simply logical. Yet this issue has ever been addressed in either magazine incarnation, and I seriously doubt that it will be addressed in this one. It is simply that all the Amazons remain sisterly toward each other, nothing more (for those interested in such a society, I recommend the science fiction novel, *Alph*, by Charles Eric Maine).

Once again, the Amazon society—and, hence, Wonder Woman herself—is found to exist on a foundation of Romanticism, rather than reality.

It remains to be seen whether this incarnation of the Amazon princess will begin a relationship with the "new" Steve Trevor, but, as I have pointed out, such a relationship should not even know where to begin. It should be doomed from the start. But if it does begin, it will undoubtedly be a repeat of the ones that we have seen before, the significance of Trevor's mother's story (*WW* #12) aside.

Finally, there are two really irritating parts about Wonder Woman that are continuing thorns in my side every time I pick up a new issue of the magazine. The first is that the Classical origin has assumed the dominant picture in the magazine. I know that this is deliberate, but it pulls the character away from the really pressing issues of our society, and sends her off on tangents delving into her own world rather than ours. Issues 10-12 have Diana fighting Hydras and answering the "Challenge of the Gods," while Boston, her base city, has one of the highest rates of car thefts in the United States! Burglars, rapists, child abusers, and toxic waste dumpers are ignored in favor of mythical creatures and the whims of a Manhunter satyr!

Cover to Wonder Woman #3 by George Perez: torn by her duty to the world and the love of a man.



Secondly, Diana's reintroduction has thrown a violent element of chaos into the continuity rules of the DC Universe. Wonder Woman's "rebirth" forces upon us the situation that she was never a founding member of the old *JLA* (despite all the stories to the contrary). That she never rescued one Donna Troy from a burning tenement and sent her on the path to become Wonder Girl, who is easily the most well-rounded character in the DC Universe. Simply put, Wonder Woman has waltzed in, screwed up a *Crisis*-fixed continuity and given us a rehash of forty-year-old stories as collateral! Pardon me, DC, but that is a little hard to take! It's practically intolerable!

What would I have done? I would have allowed the Silver Age Wonder Woman to remain dead and then would have arranged for the new Dr. Light to pick up the role of Eminent Female at 666 Fifth Avenue. A divorced mother of two who works, she is the epitome of the Modern Woman. Her powers are diverse and interesting enough that she would be a delight to any writer assigned to chronicle her adventures. Plus her Japanese background would make for many interesting stories on her family and home life; stories that would be a step away from repeated story templates.

Meanwhile, I would work in close association with Marv Wolfman on his plans for Donna Troy. And perhaps five years from now—or however long it takes—when Donna has given birth to her first child, allow her to realize that she is too mature to wear the mantle of "girl," and let her inherit the title of Wonder Woman.

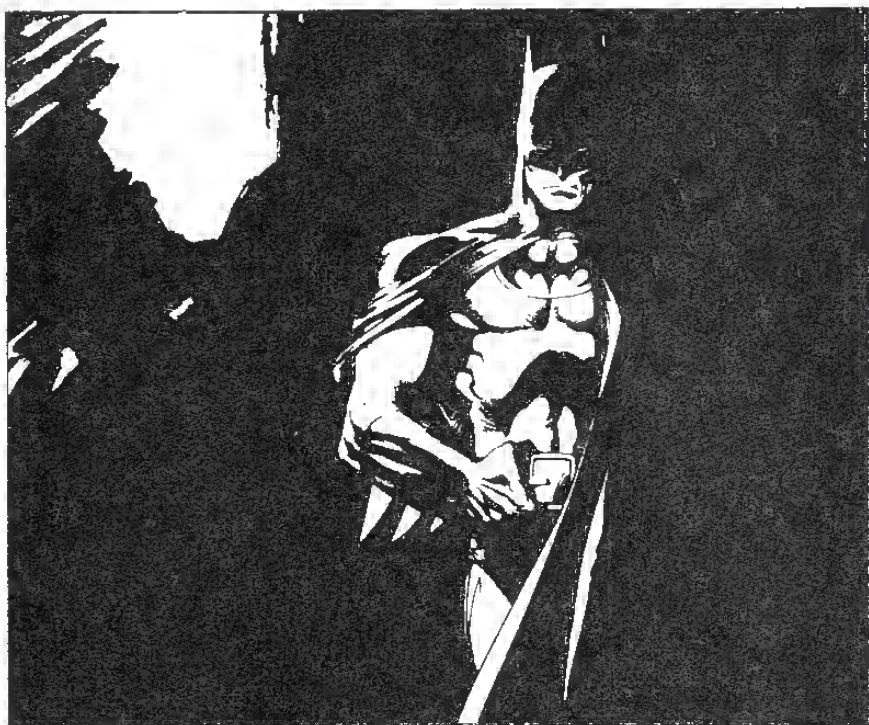
And that's off the top of my head! But it's a step away from the well-worn paths of what has been tossed to us—the reading public—for years.

But, DC has chosen to field the "Wonder Woman Mark III." I wish them the best of luck, but it is my firm opinion that more diversity, freshness, and realism must be injected into Diana before she can become palatable for the discerning comic reader. Without these qualities, she is nothing more than a rerun of times gone past. And I, for one, have had my fill of reruns!

PASSING THE BARR & BINGHAM

by Bob Lockesly

When contemplating Mike W. Barr's varied treatment of the Batman, it would be wise to keep that familiar Dickens quotation in mind:



Batman: Son of the Demon a generic cover on a "reasonably well thought out tale" by Mike Barr and precise artwork by Jerry Bingham; Bats once more confronts Ra's al Ghul and daughter Talia.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times..." In the new DC hard-back graphic novel, *Batman: Son of the Demon*, Barr manages to once again give us both, while artist Jerry Bingham delivers the best outing of his career.

It doesn't seem logical that the same writer, who along with the incredibly talented Michael Golden, gave us one of the single greatest Batman stories ever penned ("Player on the Other Side," *Batman Special* #1) is also the would-be Chris Claremont that tossed the Dark Knight Detective into a Cuisenart of costumes known as *Batman and the Outsiders*.

In *Son of the Demon*, Barr is given a chance to creatively contradict himself within the confines of a single Batman project, and does: if ever so slightly.

After a very imaginative "birth" of Ra's Ghul, the story starts off with a twelve-page siege sequence wherein some nasties take over a chemical plant, though it runs twelve pages, quite a stretch of paper to be certain, it serves as a very effective beginning to the whopping seventy-eight page story. In a normal twenty-page issue of *Batman* the scene would occupy a few panels, or maybe splash page. Here we get to see both writer and artist take their time as The Batman hoses a contingent of terrorists that are trying to steal chemicals.

One aspect played up in this scene, and in other parts of the story, is that of being an orphan. Here we get to see a pregnant woman roughed up by the terrorists, and since this is a graphic novel we get to see her called "bitch." It is then Batman finally comes into action, and afterwards demands the

pregnant women receive medical attention before one of the wounded criminals. He makes a few comments about the importance of parents, which we are treated to a few more times in the course of the story. All of this is, of course, standard Barr fare, but it is not as glopped on as in the past. Somehow his grim diatribes work within the pacing of this tale.

Unfortunately, a vigilante doesn't live on diatribe alone, and on his way back to the Batcave he passes out in an alley. It seems that he'd taken a bit more than he'd estimated, and in his unconscious state we get to see the Barr/Bingham Bat-Origin. This obligatory little sequence, done for the benefit of the uninitiated Walden Books crowd that may pick this up when it's reprinted in paperback, is spiced up enough to interest most avid readers. When Bats awakes, he is shocked to be in the Batcave, and even more shocked that his old flame Talia has brought him there.

Talia is the daughter of perhaps The Batman's greatest foe, Ra's al Ghul. Originally appearing in *Batman* from issues 242-244, Ra's al Ghul was the creation of Denny O'Neil and Neal Adams during their extremely successful attempt to revitalize The Batman and undo all of the harm Adam West and Company did to the character's credibility a few years prior. Obsessed with "cleansing the earth," Ra's al Ghul's confrontation with the caped crusader garnered both The Batman's despicement as well as his reluctant respect—for here was no ordinary villain, but a man whose intellect and reasoning equalled The Batman's own.

In the Batcave, Talia (who once

betrayed Ra's for the love of Batman) will not tell whether her father is involved, nor why she herself was at the scene. This tight-lipped stuff grows thin fast, but we then have Batman trying to contact a scientist to help him figure out why the terrorists would want said chemicals, and as luck would have it the professor is dead. Then, in a truly characteristic Barr twist, Batman figures out that Ra's al Ghul must have been murderer. Why? *Because of a piece of paper ripped out of an encyclopedia that is clutched by the dead man!* No joke!

This page has on it the binary star "Algol," which is enough to convince Bats to fly out to the middle east to confront Ra's Personally, if I found the dead man holding the paper, I'd wait a few seconds before wasting all that time and money on a wild Ra's chase. But it's more than enough for Barr's Batman. He seems to like his dead people to clutch things. Not just anything, mind you, but juicy incriminating things. Lord knows there wouldn't be a jury in the land that could pass up a guilty verdict on evidence such as this. Does anybody remember Barr's *Batman* annual story where the victim exposes his murderer within the score of a little electronic tennis game? Yet another one of those dramatic court room stoppers...

Batman finally arrives at Ra's' mountain fortress and once again meets his foe. It should be pointed out that this story pretty much ignores all previous Ra's continuity, i.e. the last time the two met was probably in the O'Neil/Adams stories. In this respect the story is very good, as almost anyone else who ever tried to use the character made himself look like a Tony Isabella or Jerry Conway quoting Tolstoy. Here Barr manages to give us the same Ra's that O'Neil did—the suave and sedate master of anarchy you hate but must grudgingly admire.

The really nice twist that Barr gives us is the alliance between Batman and al Ghul against the real murderer and the mastermind behind the chemical plant break-in. This villain, aptly named Qaynin, is a Quadaffe-type of mad man in a little mythical country just underneath the Soviet Union. He is also Ra's al Ghul's godson. Here Barr lets loose a volley of orphan-making revelations: Qaynin is the killer of Talia's mother and Ra's sent Qaynin's parents on a suicide mission in WWII. Therefore, both wants the other to die.

The rest of the book has some interesting developments along with some pretty hackneyed plot elements. Before the story ends we get to see Batman and Ra's play a little game of chess, which serves as a symbolic discussion of their relationship past,

present, and future; we are treated to the worst drawn Reagan and Gorbachev ever; we get a torture scene; we learn that Qaynin is going to try to control a U.S. "weather making satellite" (...just like in "Superman III" [choke!]); Talia bares Batman's child; and the epic's ending gives us an invasion and a battle worthy of any better James Bond movie.

What? You say to go back a second? To the "Talia bares Batman's child" part?! Thought you might've noticed that. Okay, the more astute among you saw that slipped in. The even smarter noticed the title, *Son of the Demon*, and figured there must be some significance to it. There is. Talia announces that she is pregnant. All are ecstatic, especially Batman. She later announces that has she lost the baby, all because of Qaynin's attack; Batman gets extremely pissed. Naturally we can't have a married Batman and a Batbaby (Holy Mort Weisinger!), so the entire part about Talia and child is handled as best it can be. There is a cop-out, as there has to be, but Barr does it the best way possible. All I'll say is that Talia loves Batman more than he knows.

Who or what actually is the "Son of the Demon?" Is it Ra's? Qaynin? Batman? Gary Groth? Well, Talia has been known as the "Daughter of the Demon," and *Ra's al Ghul* means something like "Head of the Demon," so that is a question best left up to the reader.

As far as the story goes, we'll give Mr. Barr passing marks. It's certainly not the best thing he's done or will ever do. Weaker elements aside, there is a reasonably well thought-out tale and good usage of a few interesting characters. If anything he succeeds in doing a very nice Denny O'Neil riff. Mr. Barr's partner in this endeavor does get deservedly higher grades.

Jerry Bingham's art is extremely competent, bordering on precision. Light years ahead of his work on First's *Warp* series and *Beowulf* graphic novel, *Son of the Demon* shows his pencilling, inking, and coloring to be truly first-rate. In this, his very first Batman story, he manages to present a Neal Adams sensibility to a more fluid type of storytelling that makes up for the plot weaknesses.

His renderings of Ra's, Talia, and Batman are definitely Adams-inspired, as they well should be, but still retain the flavor of Bingham's own detailed style. It would seem that the remaining characters were drawn from photographs, as they look like real people. None of the recurring faces with different wigs that Adams (as well as Byrne and others) would usually do are present, and with this

touch Bingham nonverbally expresses character somewhat the way George Perez did in *Teen Titans* those many years ago.

In his layouts he presents graphic montages that give scope to the tale, using his panels to concentrate more on the specifics of a scene or for a cinematic emphasis. This approach makes for some very easily read and creative transitions, as well as a smootheness to the entire story. He also takes full advantage of the seventy-odd pages allotted him, delegating the space towards the more interesting aspects he's presenting. Some of the spreads are subtly Chaykin-esque, though they are extremely low-key and lack the manic flurry that Chaykin injects into even the most sedate of happenings.

Bingham's coloring is most pleasing, bringing to the work a European feeling that is rarely brought across in American comics. The blues, yellows, and oranges blend well together and also work well within the story, making one wonder as to whether or not Jean Giraud broke into Bingham's studio and helped out. His use of negative space (a few b-&w illos thrown in amongst the colored goings ons) is also effective in the course of the storytelling, and serves as a reminder of the quality of the colors.

The only quibble with the art chores is that of the cover: a generic Batman painting, this rather bland error in art direction could be used as a cover for almost any Batman comic, and given Bingham's talent should have instead foretold of the interesting artwork inside. Ironically enough, Bingham's black-&white sketch of Batman used on the back cover (and in a color incarnation on the title-credits spread) is far more interesting than the full color painting. The logo and copy on the cover also suck, though most probably not to the fault of Bingham.

It should be noted that the size of the book is that of a trade paperback (the size of most Marvel graphic novels, Dave Stevens' *Rocketeer* graphic novel, Doug Wildey's *Rio*, etc.) and not that of the comic-sized *Dark Knight*, *Swamp Thing*, and *Watchmen* compilations. There is also a rather blase intro written by Mark Hamill (yes, the Mark Hamill of "Star Wars" fame) and some very spiffy endpapers done with Bingham pencil sketches of Batman and Qaynin.

All in all the project is about 80 per cent as good as it should have been. Hopefully, DC will continue to try books such as this, as both their form and content help their characters transcend the direct-sales ghetto. It's definitely worth a look, if not a read through; and it shouldn't let that many ardent Bat-Fans down.

IT'S COMMENTIN' TIME! with Sidney Mellon

AND, LO, THE READERS SHALL SPEAK

"No man is an island."

—Bartlett's Familiar Quotations

Never let it be said that Sidney Mellon is an island.

I accepted the agonizing destiny of being a columnist for one reason and one reason alone: To bring a new view of graphic literature to you, the confused masses of fandom. I did not expect everyone to like me for it. I knew that my controversial views would stir up anger from those who would narrow our minds. Every great unweaver of Truth, from doomed Socrates to tormented Harlan Ellison, has suffered for his courage. Should Sidney Mellon be any different?

But even I did not expect a titanic tempest of hostility such as the mail brought on my column when I was being published in *ComicsWeek* which is now cancelled. I wish that I could ignore this swirling vortex of maddened rage and go on with my duty. I wish that I could say, "It is done. Now I am published by *Amazing Heroes*, and I rise Phoenix-like, a new Mellon."

But I cannot. Because the great Bartlett is right. No man is an island. I can no more seal myself off from the feelings of my readers than Charles Xavier can seal his mind from the psychic agonies of those whom men call mutants.

So here I will present some of letters which *ComicsWeek* received, and even those must I edit, for many

found my columns worthy of long comments.

One of them was *ten pages* long! And another one was *six pages*... *single-spaced!*

But enough ado. Let the letters begin:

Dear Editor,

Excuse me if I start to ramble in incoherent sentences, but that monster you call Sidney is perpetuating the exact same kind of prejudice he claims to be fighting. Really now, do you believe for one minute that someone who has just read *Maus*, one man's father's personal account of the horrors of Nazi concentration camps, is going to see a parallel in New Mutants?!! I can't believe Sid actually states, "[New Mutants] is about oppression and genocide. But because it's about mutants, who are really just like people, instead of mice, it is much more relevant to our life." MICE?? God help the comics industry if this is the kind of fan we are faced with in the coming years.

All I can chalk this up to is the fact that poor ol' Sidney is stuck in his pre-puberty years, has no idea what the word "art" means, other than his narrow-minded version of the word, and that his very existence gives new meaning to the term "geeky fan-boy."

A word to the publisher—Come-on! This Sidney guy has got to be destroyed—and destroyed immediately! What's more, his remains should

be encased in six feet of concrete. And please, don't let him get old enough to reproduce!

Ken Holewczynski, Publisher
B-Movie Comics

Well, Ken, I'm glad to see you are at least man enough to admit being incoherent! Obviously you do not think very clearly, or you could not have missed the fact that *Maus* is about mice. Didn't you notice the funny faces on the characters? You should look harder at your spelling, too. You misspelled "perpetrating" in your very first paragraph!

And you not only admit that you're incoherent, you admit that your company is second-rate! Why else call it "B-Movie Comics?" Why not "A-Movie Comics?" Maybe you should also admit that "Holewczynski" isn't your real name! Obviously you are just trying to cash in on one of Marvel's hottest artists, Bill Sienkiewicz!

But even your incoherentness isn't any excuse for attacking my personal puberty! It is a sign of an immature mind to think that everything has to revolve around sex. I live a very fulfilling life by devoting myself to the joys of graphic literature, writing, and collecting. Maybe if you did the same you could get over some of your mental problems!

Dear Editor,

I have never actually been angered before by something I've read in a comics magazine. But, Sid, take your well-deserved credit—your column made me hang my head in disbelief and shake with rage. First, though, let me tell you that your heart is in the right place. Comics should be recognized by the public at large as the "graphic literature" that they are, since they do have some value. Unfortunately, your head is firmly stuck in your ass.

When I came to part that reads, "Could Ulysses fight off a super-scientific criminal with an electronic exoskeleton of nigh limitless power? Of course not!" I was caught off-guard for a moment. I mean, what an incredibly stupid thing to say. I assume that Sid's point is that "ancient" heroes just couldn't cut it in today's world, which, apparently, is filled with super-scientific criminals with...etc., and therefore current heroes are the only ones that matter. I disagree.

I would rather read of the epic adventures of Ulysses than any Marvel story dealing with mutants.

Sid argues that anyone who thinks comics are just for kids "has obviously never read *The Uncanny X-Men*." Well, I don't think that comics are just



A future at Marvel or DC for the Hernandezes? Maybe with more fight scenes, like the one described above. Sid says there may be some Hopey.

for kids, but, let me tell you, The Uncanny X-Men had little to do with shaping my opinion. Sid also claims that the X-Men are "true graphic heroes, heroes who teach heroism to us all." (Great phrase, eh?) Indeed, "hearken to the words" of Psylocke, offered by Sid as a shining example of comic book prose. (I'll spare you untold agony by reprinting them here. You know how Claremont's dialogue goes). Someone please pass me a large bucket, I'm going to vomit.

He tells us that "the people who really bother me" are the ones who want to read some comics that are NOT about super-heroes. Sid says, "I feel sorry for them. Because they think they're being very smart and elitish, when all they're being is conceited." Finally, Sid says that "These are the kinds of fans who are giving comic books a bad name."

Sit down, Sid, and take your hands out of your pants; this may come as a big shock. YOU are the kind of fan who are giving comic books a bad name. You, who blindly stumble toward "today's hottest crop of Marvel newcomers." You, who offer such warped, insane, and all-around prejudiced views of comic books.

ATTENTION! If Frank Miller happens to be reading this, listen carefully. Frank, you had better have yourself cremated after you pass on, rather than buried. Otherwise, Sidney would probably dig up your corpse, stuff it, and hang it on his wall. You are a very skilled writer and artist, Frank, but Sid's devotion to you is scary. He says that "anything, even just one page, just one little panel, that Frank Miller even breathed on" is superior to everything else, just by the fact that it's Miller's. And, Frank, I know you'll be glad to hear this—he puts you on a par with "wedding issues" as examples of "especially important" comic books! Forget Daredevil! At last you have achieved true and lasting fame!

Ray Vallese

You know, Ray, it's one thing to attack me...but when you bring a talented and brilliant super-star like Mr. Frank Miller into it, well, that's another thing! I wouldn't be surprised if a letter from Frank doesn't arrive at *Amazing Heroes* within days of this column appearing in print! And I know what he'll say: "we creative artists know how important it is to

have critics interpret our works for the masses. I deeply appreciate Mr. Mellon's kind and perceptive comments about my humble work."

But I don't expect you to believe that until you see it in print. Obviously anybody who wants to "vomit" when he reads Chris Claremont's profound prose doesn't know anything about the artistic soul!

Dear Mr. Mellon,

I've heard the theory advanced that you aren't to be taken seriously, that you are, in fact, some sort of nasty joke being played on an unsuspecting fandom. Well, maybe there's something wrong with my sense of humor, but I'm having a hard time laughing at your attack on my integrity in *ComicsWeek* #3.

There you state that "Judging by his glowing reviews of Avengers, Thor, and The Punisher, Gerald Jones does have some integrity. But then he pays lip service to elitism... obviously for the sake of his career!"

You seem incapable of considering the possibility that one reader could maintain a boyish enjoyment of mainstream super-hero comics and yet still appreciate the truly creative,

individual works of people like Jaime and Gilbert Hernandez, Scott McCloud, Carl Barks, and Peter Bagge.

If you can't see the greatness in comics like *Love and Rockets*, fine. That's your loss. But I resent your unfounded accusation that I'm only pretending to appreciate such excellent work in order to keep my membership in some conspiracy of "elitists." It seems obvious to me that most of the vital, meaningful work in what you insist upon calling "graphic literature" is occurring beyond the bounds of the standard super-hero comics you idolize—but clearly you can't see that, any more than you can see that someone might be able to share a few of your tastes without also sharing in your tunnel-vision. Frankly, I'm glad. I would hate to think that I was simple-minded enough to be easily pigeon-holed by the likes of you.

Gerard Jones

P.S.: If you are going to attack me, at least try to spell my God damn name right!

Has a letter ever caused me such sadness as this one? Nay, for naught could be sadder than a mind wasted. Gerald, I thought you had the potential promise of a fine graphic literature reviewer. But now I see that you are just like the rest of them. Yes, you have become just another Elitist. Perhaps it is because of the pressure you must have been under, working for the infamous Mr. Gary Groth. And perhaps I should not blame you for this, for I have met Gary and I know how frightening he is.

But every critic owes it to himself—aye, and most of all, his readers—to be true to his own convictions. I am very sorry that you could not join me in standing by my beliefs.

(As for me misspelling your name, don't you think you might be calling the kettle black? I've known dozens of people named Gerald, and every last one of them spelled it the way I do. I'll bet if we were to take a vote right here and now, we'd find out in a hurry just who was misspelling it. And it wouldn't be me!)

Dear Editor,

I have grave reservations about Sidney Mellon's ability to responsibly and intelligently handle an editorial column. In one short column, he managed to shift focus at least three times, insult your readership, and prove himself a narrow-minded, hypocritical child. Intentionally or not, his editorial advocates a de-evolution of the comic book medium.

Mellon innocently begins his

THOSE PTERASAURS ARE GLIDERS. THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO MAKE ANY HEADWAY AGAINST THE WINDS I'VE SET UP AROUND THIS PEAK.



Making headway against the winds of bigotry: X-Men—about real mutants and not mice like Maus.

editorial with a search for contemporary heroes. In itself, it is an admirable quest. Mankind has always had a consuming fascination with the heroic ideal, and has drawn on this ideal for both guidance and inspiration. Yet, Master Mellon quickly and unnecessarily narrows the scope of what constitutes "heroic," overlooking numerous heroes in order to focus fallaciously upon the purely "fantastic" and "superhuman." This reflects an immature and naive worldview and a complete lack of insight into the Human Condition. (It is pitiful that Master Mellon believes he learns more from the shallow and fictitious world of "Psylocke" than the altruistic and noble deeds of Mother Theresa of Calcutta).

Mellon clearly misunderstands the potential of the comic book medium. When there is a harmonic union of the words and visual images—a perfect marriage of creative elements—a comic book may become a valuable teaching tool, often stressing truth, friendship, justice, and the necessity of action and conflict in the maturation process.

An especially sensitive creator (such as Alan Moore or Kazuo Koike) may be able to strike a balance between story elements to create a powerful and believable work. Comic books reflecting such sensitivity will be timely, powerful, and vital for many generations to come, because they appeal to almost universal perceptions of the Human Condition. But comic books are only tools; they are not substitutes for actual, living experience.

Unfortunately, it is because of people like Master Mellon that comics continue to be considered children's literature. [Someone] needs to break the mental sets, or ruts, into which comic critics, such as Master Mellon, have entrenched themselves; someone who will encourage debate rather than insultingly provoke scorn and contempt. Mellon needs editorial guidance and a trifle more experience with the Human Condition before he is capable of maturely and intelligently handling the responsibility of an educated opinion column.

Ed McKeogh

Wow, Ed, I wish I could have printed all ten pages of your letter! Even if you don't agree with everything I say, it is good to know that you take my column seriously enough to write such a long, thoughtful letter about it. And thanks for calling me "Master" Mellon—although I don't think I've been around long enough to be called the "Master." Not yet, anyway! [And, Sid, you better not own any slaves, either, or you won't be writing for this magazine anymore.—Ed]

But you are wrong that I do not know about the Human Condition. I have experienced it in all its pulse-pounding glory, in the farthest reaches of space and time, among all creatures both human and alien... through the artistic wonders of graphic literature. I hope now that you have read more of my columns, you realize that I am actually not nearly as naive as you thought. ●

AMAZING READERS

**This is YOUR forum. Address all missives (no missiles, please) to:
1800 Bridgegate Street, Suite 101, Westlake Village, CA 91361**



This should do it for the Kim answers to the letters column (Awww from audience) like I said, Kim, anytime.

ARTHUR CROSBY
Louisville, KY

Why Worry About Continuity & Fandom?

Life's not fair! We live in a world of

the nuclear age, where whoever makes the most bombs wins. We live in a world of sin where drugs, murder, terrorism, and corruption are everyday things. We live in a world where most people don't care; homeless, starving people are common sights. [We live in a world where repetition is considered high rhetoric. —KT]

Comics are a chance to escape this, where you can journey into a fantasy world, relax and forget your troubles.

Instead of worrying about who sold what to Iran, we'd be better off reading about the *Adventures of Captain Atom*. Instead of worrying about who's winning in Afghanistan, sit down and read the newest *Detective*. Why worry about the poverty in Mexico when a brand new issue of *Iron Man* is sitting there unread?

Why then would someone care so much about continuity or fandom? If you like reading *Transformers* don't skip it because people tell you it's dumb and a waste of money. Don't pass over the *New Universe* just because critics warn you to stay away from it. Don't read *Watchmen* if it's going to cause the rest of the day to be gloomy. Don't read Frank Miller if you don't want to. No two people are alike and one man's trash may be another man's treasure. I respect Dave Sim's philosophy very much concerning his comic, "If you don't like it don't buy it." Life's too short to be wasted. We never know when a nuclear war might start, nature attack, or the end of it all. Enjoy life while you can.

● *This is no way to encourage the vitriolic letter page arguments you seem to enjoy so much, judging from your last letter.*
—KT

MIKE KINDER
McKeesport, PA

The Joker's On You

Thanks loads for Virginia Williams Pennick's "The Ace of Knives." It was Kneat. (I couldn't resist that.) What with all the hate mail you receive each issue, I'm happy to be able to write something upbeat. Hell, I even agreed with you, Dooley. Sure, other writers would have turned a Joker history into a rehash of his past adventures, but Pennick's analytic approach to the whole thing made for an interesting yarn.

As a longtime Joker fan, I've grumbled for years at the way this character has been left to stagnate. It wasn't long enough for those SOBs to screw up the Superman legend, but watching the Joker floundering in these inane plots never fails to leave me crying in my beer. All in spite of the many letters of protest sent by me and others. Well, since when did reader input mean squat to DC?

Born nit-picker that I am, though, I beg to differ with Virginia on that homosexual bit. Frank Miller didn't pull any punches, but I am more inclined to believe The Joker is bisexual. How else can you explain his raping Selina Kyle in *Dark Knight* #3? I'm not one of those people who sees

MIKE PATTERSON



IVAN RAKITIC

a homo under every bed, but in Joker's case, a little suspicion is justified. I mean, the guy wears mascara, for Chrissake! Not to mention his flirting with members of the same sex. I do agree that DC Comics should either let him go one way or the other and to hell with the prudes out there. But enough of this griping. "Knaves" was a good piece of writing and by the way, Kevin, I happen to like alliterations.

I also enjoyed the fact that Virginia didn't go into raptures over Miller's *Dark Knight*. One paragraph in tribute was plenty. She had guts to admit the book has been "critiqued to death." I can just hear those Miller brown-nosers screaming over that. *Dark Knight* was blown way out of proportion. A good "what if..." story but that's it.

Normally, the author's name won't catch my eye, but I tend to notice the three-barrel ones and was surprised to see that "Knaves" was written by a woman. Please, spare your poison-pen letters; I'm not a male chauvinist.

What I mean is I don't remember reading anything in *AH* by a woman before. If I'm mistaken, sue me. I salute my favorite magazine for being an equal opportunity publisher.

There was a question Virginia brought up that I have asked myself on occasion. Yeah, come to think of it, it's been damn near 50 years since The Joker's creation. So when the hell are we going to find out who he really is? I don't know about the rest of you couch potatoes out there, but I'm writing Denny O'Neil—or whoever is in charge these days—and rattle some cages. I may even suggest that they get their hands on Virginia Williams Pennick and let her do the Joker origin. Taking DC's track record into account, they would probably foul up the story. Such a project should be attempted by someone who gives a damn. Virginia certainly seems to.

Again, my profound thanks to *AH* for a spectacular issue. I won't babble on for another eight pages like these other windbags love to do. I'll close with offering Virginia Williams Pen-

nick my congratulations on a fine story. And please tell her not to mind the assholes who adore picking a great article to pieces. If they think they can do better—let 'em try. Take care.

● Alan Moore and Brian Bolland's *Joker* graphic novel is scheduled for release (finally!) within the next eight months, reliable sources at DC tell me. As for woman writers, Heidi MacDonald's probably going to be real offended with you. Tsk! Also, I don't believe it was ever explicitly stated that The Joker raped Selina Kyle (and even if he did, rape is an act of violence rather than passion, so the point is moot in this context). —KT

ROB KELLY
Cherry Hill, NJ

The Forgotten Titles

In the last year, all the talk has been about *Dark Knight*, *Watchmen*, *Superman*, *Flash* and *Crisis* ramifications. Some really great series debuted or continued in '86-'87, yet they are ignored. Now, before you yell, I thought *Watchmen* was probably the best comic I've ever read, but let's give a little publicity to those books that are always well done, or some really fine mini-series.

From DC: The last two years of *Vigilante*. Even though, for the most part, the main character is a real psycho, the book is very well-written and very well-drawn. Too bad that #50 will be the last issue. Also excellent was 1986's *Aquaman* mini-series. Now I'm a bit biased here, for Aquaman is my all-time favorite character, but the story was great and the art was absolutely fantastic. But that was 1½ years ago, and penciller Craig Hamilton has yet to reappear. What happened to him? Even though it got a lot of publicity from *AH* as well as the *Journal*, *Mazing Man* still died. I hope the Christmas one-shot does well enough to warrant a new series. *Green Lantern*, now *Green Lantern Corps*, although sometimes is a bit too standard, is a very enjoyable read. Ditto *Silverblade*, some issues of *Spectre*, and most recently, *Underworld*, *Slash Maraud*, and *Doc Savage*.

From Marvel: Only one underrated title springs to mind: *Groo*. I fervently hope that *Groo* is a strong seller. If Marvel thinks about cancelling it, bring it over to Eclipse or First. *Groo* really deserves to keep going. Besides, it'll keep Evanier, who doesn't work on enough things, busy. I think a *Groo/Conan* team up would be wild, but I could be wrong.

From First: *E-Man*. It's a shame to see *E-Man* go. Any chance for a

return? From Fantagraphics: *Journey*. The tactic of having *Journey* restart at #1 was wise. I bought it for the first time at the restart, and I love it. From Eclipse: *Crossfire*, *Whodunnit*, and especially *Zor!* *Cerebus* is pretty damn good, too. Love the covers. Now to bitch.

I have problems with some of the titles that are being put out now. Not by the little mom and pop books, either. I'm talking the big boys. From DC: *Mask?* *Centurions?* *Amethyst?* From Marvel: *New Mutants*, *X-Factor*, *Fallen Angels*, *X-Men vs* _____

(fill in the blank)? Jesus, come on! The company with the most offenses is Eclipse. At least with DC, crap, it's only 75¢. But with Eclipse crap, you're talking \$2.00! *California Girls?* *Captain Eo?* What the hell? Does Cat really think people will pay \$2.00 for dolls that you can cut out from comics?!!

Also, I really don't see the problem with these mom and pop comic books. Any comic shop owner with an IQ of two digits can figure out anything with a title like *Rodents*, *Ninjas*, blah blah blah will make about as much money as say, *Wonder Woman*, yet the black and white crap will die out in a year, while *Wonder Woman* will be there forever. It comes down to the shop owners being greedy enough to buy this crap and then bitch that there's too much of it. If they didn't order it, the kids wouldn't buy it, thus creating a big circle! Hell, DC's been here 52 years, and yet dealers are ordering titles from them in the same amounts they're ordering *Silverwolf* shit! By the

way, at some convention, I saw a book that had a yellow border on the cover, with a paragraph that read to a tune like this "We know what you're thinking... not true... this is a true effort on our parts... blah blah..." So I decided to flip through it, and on every odd page (the page you would first see if holding it in your hand) was pin-ups of DC and Marvel characters, rather well-drawn. Every even page was a "funny animal ninja" story that, as far as I could tell, was an attempt to cash in on the craze. I barely kept cool enough to not tear it to shreds and then flush it down a toilet. It's probably in some shop somewhere with a \$5.00 price tag. Jesus.

Any chance anyone could get the rights to reprint those classic *Herbie* comics from ACG? And did anyone ever notice that *Herbie* has the same speech pattern as Rorschach? I knew *Herbie* was demented, but, my God, he grew up wrong!

While I'm rambling on, any chance of finding the places of residence of Solson and *Silverwolf* and nuking those sites?? A little radiation never hurt anybody...

Characters who deserve solo series: *Captain Marvel* (I know a Roy Thomas/Dave Gibbons combo on that would be excellent), *Creeper* (Alan Moore and Frank Miller), *Herbie*, and *Black Orchid* (Mindy Newell and Terry Austin).

While I'm thinking of it, here are some "creators" that there should be some boycott against: Jim Shooter, Roger "the 20-issue epic battle" Stern,

and especially Al Milgrom. Did he actually graduate art college? Probably the same school that the *Silverwolf* artists went to.

Well, that's enough. One more thing: Let's see interviews with Dave Gibbons, Bob Kane, Gil Kane, Hernandez Bros., and Jerry Siegel (what does he think of the new *Superman*?).

• You like Roy Thomas's *Captain Marvel* and Paul Kupperberg's *Vigilante*? So you're the one. *Black Orchid* is coming back, in a series by two Brits whose names elude me at the moment. Dave Gibbons was interviewed in a recent *Comics Journal*, *Los Bros.* will be covered there eventually as well, and the others are darn fine suggestions too. —KT

T.M. MAPLE
Ontario, Canada

He's Back Again

As "one of those editorials containing a story from the editor's past" go, the one in #124 was a good one. Your point that "'I have no time' is a rotten excuse for censorship" was deftly made and cuts to the heart of the censorship debate, at least in part. It is ironic that parents calling for "guidelines" or "censorship" or whatever are probably amongst the ones that *need* such things the *least*. After all, by making such demands they have demonstrated at least that they are *concerned* of their children and





DAVID PHILLIP

presumably are likely to be involved in supervising their children's reading material. (Of course, I do *not* mean to imply that parents who don't call for censorship are not often just as concerned with raising their children properly!)

However, what about all of those children (and there are lots of them, unfortunately) whose parents are much less concerned or able to guide them properly? In an ideal world, all parents would provide such guidance but we all now that this is not the case. Is there, then, some group responsibility to provide some form of guidance to fill this gap—either imposed by society (government) or voluntarily offered by the comics industry? That is one question—and I offer no answer here. And, of course, there is the other question as to whether or not such guidance is *needed*—or, put another way, if it is the best solution. Those who oppose censorship/guidelines of any form may feel that a child does not suffer from having free choice of all material or, alternately, that while such freedom may not be ideal (e.g., parental guidance would be preferred, if available) that it is much the lesser evil than those engendered by the im-

position of censorship. Again, I don't have the answers—at least not so firmly held as to state them concisely here!

Such consideration also tie in with the second of Dwight Decker's columns on Dr. Wertham that appeared in this issue. Certainly, he was one of those who believed that society had the obligation to "guide" the reading material available to children. Decker well illustrates that however well-intended such concerns may be, they can definitely be imperfect in their implementation and effect! This series of columns is very welcome, as it gives us a better look at a man and a phenomenon that are widely known but little understood these days, usually being greeted by little more than a derisive shrug.

In the lettercol, Peter Stringer asks for the "return" of the Top 20. (Wasn't it the Top 100?) You reply by saying that "what sells is so infrequently a reflection of what's good, why bother?" Well, true enough, but so what? Who said that it was *supposed* to reflect what's good?! Surely, its purpose would be to show what's *popular*. How this relates to what's good would be a judgment each reader could make for himself. Of course, I realize that compiling a Top 20 (or 100!) is a

lengthy task and may not be worth the effort for you, but its potential worth should not be wrongly dismissed.

WILLIAM GATEVACKES
Inkerman, PA

Defending Wertham

I read issues #123 and 124 over the Labor Day weekend. I was amazed at Dwight Decker's articles about Dr. Wertham. I always had an image of him as a fanatical madman who worked on a first impression from outside of the comics industry. When you think of it, Wertham was about 47 when *Batman* came out, a little old to start reading comics. Putting all of your experience in comics aside, if you saw Robin in those tights, well... But Wertham seemed read up and his intentions were good. But you know where good intentions will get you.

I would like to know why companies label their books "For mature readers only." What is their idea of mature? I am 15 years old and I think I am mature. What am I able to read?

I am sorry to see Gerard Jones go. To my knowledge he is the only reviewer who liked my favorite book, *The Avengers*.

Keep up the good work. I'm surprised to find issues I think would be boring, entertaining. You're doing a terrific job as editor. Glad to see you putting humor in the "Coming Distractions."

● *If you can actually write a coherent, articulate letter, you're almost certainly old enough to read "mature readers" comics. But because you're legally a minor you're able to read what your parents let you read. I agree that the 18-year-old age limitation is a bit dopey (I'd put it at 14 or so if had the power to do it), but there you have it. I really can't imagine any kid being damaged from reading Love and Rockets or Swamp Thing, but if parents don't want their children to have access to that kind of material, that's their right. Yeah, I know, I'm a mean ol' fascist.*

Putting humor in the "Coming Distractions" is easier than it used to be.

—KT

EDWARD EGAN
Waldwick, NJ

Pleasure from AH

I have been reading *AH* for about a year now, and few magazines have given me more pleasure. The title, *Amazing Heroes*, sounds a wee amateurish compared to *Four Color* or *Comics Interview*, but a journey



through the pages will demolish notions of amateurism. Its design is among the most elegant of magazines of its kind. The writers, good or not-so-good, keep *AH* one of the liveliest.

I thought Gerard Jones an excellent acquisition and so I regret his departure. His reviews were great fun to read. Mr. Jones spent as much time telling why he liked something as why he disliked something. Even when he lost his temper he tried to keep his head. He also kept his sarcasm to a minimum. When he played a tart note, it usually stood out and made its point. Anyhow, he is gone and I will miss him.

The guest reviewer, in #25, Mr. Cochran wastes no time in taking aim and firing. The comics in his cross-hairs go down one-by-one. A few are spared; most are not. Sadly, some seem to deserve it. Mr. Cochran's relentlessness may be good for publishers in a way, but relying solely on his review, I would wonder if *anything* published nowadays has real value.

Dr. Wertham seems about ready to become a myth. Probably no other outsider had such an impact on the comics. Discussions of his theories will break up friendships even now. Wertham is usually condemned in

comics journals, his crimes ranging from censorship to stupidity. True, his research has been called questionable by colleagues as well as comics professionals, and none of his charges were conclusively proved. Yet, few critics admit themselves to be taken very seriously. Not all the comic material suppressed was of high quality. Censorship is an unjust and usually useless activity, but many of the '50s comics were extremely gross and lurid. Wertham might have called them symptoms of the NCAA syndrome—No Class At All.

I mentioned *AH*'s elegant layout a while back. A suggestion comes to mind. Why not an article or issue devoted wholly to graphic design in comics? All other parts are paid for—pencilling, inking, letter, etc. Comic graphics should be given their due. All areas should be covered from the cover logotype to the ad for deluxe joy buzzers. It's worth a try.

A question—has there ever been an article on Alex Raymond? I've enjoyed reprints of his *Flash Gordon* strip. He has been called one of comics' best ever draftsmen. You should explore why, if you have not done so already.

A second question—has there been a vote determining the all-time great

rogue's gallery? Good villains are hard to come by. Which is the best?

● *You mean aside from Jim Shooter? We'll be doing an all-Flash Gordon issue next February, and if there isn't an Alex Raymond article in that, we'd look pretty stupid. Thanks for the compliments, especially from our harried graphics department.* —KT

PETER GARCIA
Puerto Rico

How About...?

How about doing an article on superheroes who have multiple personalities like Moon Knight, Tigra Aurora, even Batman, who seems to be more real than Bruce Wayne, a "good-for-nothing playboy"? A good title for that article would be "Who Am I?" An interview with Jim Shooter on why he left Marvel. While it's true people who work at Marvel under Shooter later moved to DC, killed off Phoenix in *X-Men* #137 and the *JLA/Avengers* team-up project, Shooter did fight for the monetary rights of freelancers and created a system to end the deadline doom with new issues instead of reprints so anti-Shooter people should not be too hard on Jim Shooter.

Let's see a history article on the *Fantastic Four*, *Spider-Man*, *Rom*, *Capt. America*, *Superman of Earth-2*, *Daredevil* and *The Watchmen*. Since Tom DeFalco took over Shooter's job, how would that affect his plans to write *Thor* and *The Hawkeye* series in *Solo Avengers*?

● *Good question. Jim S. and Tom D. don't like speaking to us, so you may have to look elsewhere to find the answers.* —KT

LON WOLF
Maple Shade, NJ

Heroes For Children?

I thought Gerard Jones' "swan-song" Comics in Review article was a nice way of saying "adios" as he ends his tenure at your magazine.

His review of *Web of Spider-Man* brought out some very interesting thoughts. I often wonder—are the majority of superhero comic books written for children or teenagers? I feel that the answer can be mixed. If thousands of children or pre-teens buy *G.I. Joe* comics, then I'm sure that the book's writer isn't going to do a Joseph Conrad adaption. Yet, I can't help but think that a lot of today's writers are writing for a somewhat

more sophisticated audience. I'm not just talking about the comics' new grading system, like "suggested for mature readers."

Comics, like most forms of literature, can be taken on two levels. On the surface, it might seem like fantasy, but underneath, may dwell a more complex area of thought. Even *Alice In Wonderland* is said to be an abstract working of a mathematical equation. (I've yet to figure it out).

Okay, I realize that the idea of a grown man beating up thugs in colorful tights is a juvenile concept—but fantasy and fiction are legitimate forms of entertainment. After all, didn't most of our parents go to see several of the *Star Wars* films, and the *Superman* films? Even the Kanans, Greeks, etc., had their superheroes, albeit in the form of gods. And isn't the bible one of the most interesting books on heroics every scribed? Can't wait for *Jesus—The Light Knight Returns*.

I'm not saying that this month's copy of *X-Factor* should be taken so seriously. No, mutants aren't metaphors for iconoclasts and Dr. Doom isn't the anti-Christ, but a lot of them aren't Mother Goose either.

I'm for being an intellect, but I never feel I have to take my mind down several notches when reading superhero comics. Okay, sometimes a story might revolve around a "rock 'em sock 'em" fight between two gargantuan beasts, but that is part of the idea isn't it?

Watchmen, *Dark Knight* and *Miracleman* were all great at twisting and turning the superhero mythos inside and out, but essentially, the characters they dealt with are superheroes and what they do best is superheroing. You cannot escape that—no matter how great the writing is—you're still dealing with fantasy figures.

I think the Claremonts and Simon-

sons and Giffens, etc., all write with basically one idea in mind and that is to tell complete and interesting stories filled with character developments, sub-plots and intriguing disputes. I really don't think they conscientiously write with younger people in mind as much as they may keep the complexities and high vocabulary to a minimum.

I'll keep reading comics until I'm well into my senior citizenship and I shall always keep in mind their major function—and that is to entertain.

● Do you realize how much your name sounds like a pseudonym? By the way, Gerry Jones will be back when (or where) you least expect it, most likely. —KT

RICH KRIENER
Bloomington, IN

Coming Protractions

I find myself reading larger and larger portions of *AH* these days and appreciating the articles more as well. So, good work!

The bad news is that I think you may

be trying too hard for laughs in the "Coming Distractions" section. Why don't you kick back some and just stick closer to the capsule blurbs that the publishers themselves provide? Presumably that's where the preview section of *CBG* got these gems and, for my money, they are tough to beat, boffo-yuckwise.

"One of Superman's oldest foes makes his debut." (*Adventures of Superman* #437)

"Demon yuppies from hell plague London." (*Hellblazer* #3)

"Tracy hunts down Empty Williams, who bootlegs diapers." (*Dick Tracy Monthly* #21)

"Nightmask appears and everyone from the previous 14 issues dies, except for Justice." (*Justice* #15)

"The Washington Monument is destroyed by juvenile delinquents from space." (*Liberty Project* #5)

"A hamster dies." (*A.R.B.B.H.* #8)

"The Diesel Weasels breaks the rule about only two customers at the 7-11." (*Rovers* #2)

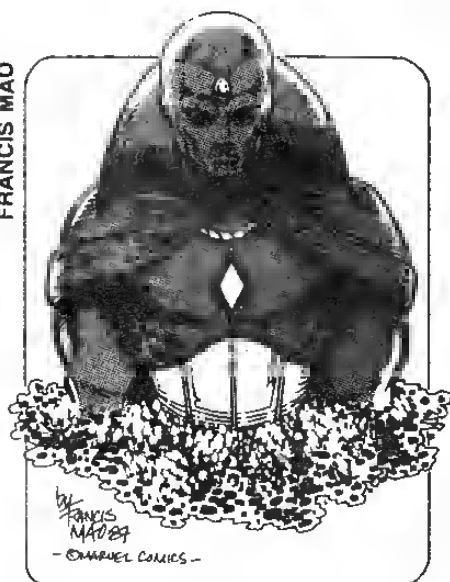
Geez, is this a great pastime or what?

● Life imitates art, or something. —KT



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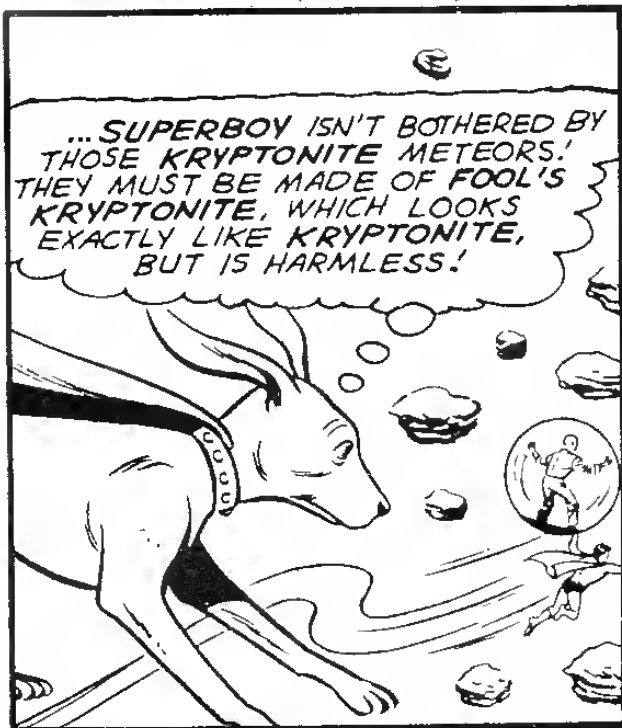
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NAME LOST OVER THE YEARS

What was the first appearance of kryptonite and what were all its manifestations?

As a matter of fact, green kryptonite was introduced in a story which I think is one of the most interesting in Superman's history, but one which I never see mentioned (probably because it no longer fits into the continuity). Kryptonite first appeared in the form of a red jewel in *Superman* #61 (Nov. 1949): The interesting point is that Superman retraces the rock's route to Earth, then looks back at the old light rays with his telescopic vision, thereby peering into past events. He sees Krypton, Jor-El, Lara, Kal-El, Krypton's explosion, the flight of Kal-El's rocket and its landing on Earth. However, only when he next witnesses the Kents finding the rocket does he realize he's watching his own origin! In a dramatic close-up panel, Superman realizes for the first time that he is *not* an Earthman and that his powers come from the fact that he's from another solar system! Up until that moment Superman had no idea why he was so much more powerful than anyone else on Earth. Of course, after many years of Superboy stories, this discovery by an adult Superman is no longer valid since we're told Superboy recalled his life on Krypton. *Superman* #61 was the first appearance of kryptonite but an interesting sidelight is that I was recently browsing through *Steranko's History of the Comics* and noticed the inclusion of some "Never Before Printed" pages of a Superman story done in 1940 by creators Siegel and Shuster which deals with kryptonite. That's all I know of that oddity.

Moving right along: Red kryptonite first appeared in *Adventure* #252 (Sept. '58), where it is described as kryptonite from the 4th dimension with ten-times the potency of regular kryptonite (How'd it get in the 4th dimension?). In *Adventure* #255 red k. again appears as

kryptonite from Mars which splits *any* living creature into two different being (creating, for instance, a simultaneously-existing Clark Kent and Superboy). Red k. finally appears in its traditional form as having strange effects only on Kryptonians in *Superman* #128 (Apr. '59)...some writer read *Adventure* #255 and must've misinterpreted it.

What's next? Superman made blue kryptonite (actually bizarre kryptonite) to combat the bizzaros in *Superman* #140 (Oct. '60).

White kryptonite, that which kills all plantlife, first appeared in *Action* #278 (July '61), the reason being that Supergirl needed something that would kill all plantlife.

Gold kryptonite, that which robs kryptonians of their super-powers, first was used in *Superman* #157 (Nov. '62).

Jewel Kryptonite, that which doesn't do much of anything (What?...it enhances the mental powers of Phantom Zone Prisoners when the scripters want it to) appeared (only?) in *Action* #310 (Mar. '64).

Since everyone remembers "Silver Kryptonite," I'd better mention its first (only?) appearance in *Jimmy Olsen* #70 (July '63). Though it was, as David Letterman would say, "Only a Joke."

How was white kryptonite formed???

As with red, and perhaps gold, white k. was formed when a flock of plain ol' green k. passed through a "mysterious space cloud."

Outside of green, red, gold, white, blue, jewel and "silver," have any other types been introduced???

As I recall from my years as an ardent Superman reader, the only other types were a few hybrids such as red/green or red/gold or some such, formed when two kryptonite meteors collided and fused in outer space. They had probably become confused and disoriented after skirting that "mysterious space cloud."

About when did DC stop using non-green kryptonite, and why??? [This is a pre-Crisis question.]

I'd guess that was the same time DC tried to stop using green k. as well. *Superman* #233 (Jan. '71) was billed as introducing a "new look" for Superman by "returning him to greatness." I had eagerly anticipated the issue, hoping it would only mean the elimination of most of the sillier aspects of the Superman legend (such as super-monkeys, super-cats, super-horses, etc.). About the only thing that occurred was the elimination of kryptonite, one of my favorite parts of the legend! The story, by Denny O'Neil, involved a chain reaction at a lab which made all kryptonite on Earth inert or powerless to effect super-folks. I don't think my Superman ever quite recovered from this short-lived "new look." [And now, of course, it seems like the only one that's left is good ol' reliable green kryptonite. But you never know with the "new" Superman.]

LEON BLOCK—N. Miami Beach, FL

Perhaps you might devote some space to revealing how you find the answers to the many queries you receive?

I like to go into this occasionally to dispel the notion that I carry all this around in my head. Lotsa' people have been reading my I.C. for nearly 15 years and picture me reading a question and then just jotting down the answer. [You mean you don't! another myth shattered! another balloon burst! Next thing you're going to tell me is Willie Lumpkin doesn't really deliver the mail to the *Fantastic Four*, that it's just a regular postman.—KD] Actually, I don't think I'm the funny book expert that some of my fellow collectors are; the only reason I might be a good choice for the sucker to be writing this column is my

enthusiasm and my fairly extensive collection. In dealing with most any question concerning a comic book of the last 35-40 years, I can get down a file box and check the issue first-hand, short of lotsa' stuff like Archie titles or *Millie the Model* and such. For matters dealing with older comics or the questions about artists and writers (as in your first query), I consult numerous low-print-run reference works by *real* comic book experts like *Jerry Bails*. I'm also a good choice for writing this column because my name is in the feature's title.

PETER GARCIA—Puerto Rico

Toby Press had a Black Knight character some years before Atlas/Marvel Comics did. Who was this other Black Knight?

You might as well ask who these other cowboys were that predated Marvel's "Kid Colt." I mean, there have been "Black Knights" in story and song for thousands of years! Toby's character (from their one-shot *Black Knight* comic in 1953) was just a period adventure concerning a good guy in Dark Armor, as was Atlas' *Black Knight* two years later. At Toby he was Sir Robert who returned penniless from the Crusades, while at Atlas he was a bit more super-hero-ish in having the mild-mannered *secret* identity of Percy of Scandia. Not very interesting, huh?

DONALD NIVEN—Westwood, CA

I know all the alternate universes are no more (save John Byrne's Time-Trapper one), but many of us have fond memories of them—luckily those recollections have not been (and cannot be) wiped away. For instance, I recall an alternate world where Supergirl (sigh!) met a woman (who looked like herself) called "Marvel Maid." M.M. had a male cousin (who... surprise!... looked like Superman) who was being kept in secrecy until he was ready to face the world (as Supergirl was in those days). His name was Marvel Man. Can you tell me where this story appeared?

It was a two-parter actually, and though I remembered it, it took me a while to find the stories in *Action* #272-273 in 1961. However, the story *did* involve an alternate planet and not an alternate universe, so I gather your first sentence was simply a bit of editorializing you snuck in.

Marvel Maid was on the planet "Terra" which was an exact duplicate of Earth right down to each individual person on the planet. There were, however, certain odd differences such as the Statue of Liberty holding a banner instead of a torch and the Eiffel Tower being in America. Now, *please*, no snickering in the audience; at least they had no mutants! As for the storyline, you summed it up pretty well that being though Marvel Maid was a ringer for Supergirl, she held the position Superman held on Earth, and vice-versa. (Actually, saying "vice-versa" is oversimplifying the thing but I don't wanna talk about it anymore.)

HUGH NOZE, Lincolnton, NL

After Stan Lee decided to stop writing everything, who was the next writer of a Marvel super-hero Book (was it Roy Thomas)???

Long before Roy Thomas joined Marvel, Stan Lee had "assistance" in writing the super-hero comics by the same folks who had helped in writing all those "pre-Marvel" monster and western comics. Artists Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko are said to have co-created (at *least*) all the heroes they drew... also, there was Robert Bernstein and Stan's brother Larry Lieber (Stan's real name being Stanley Lieber). I'll make a guess and say Roy Thomas was the first person other than Stan to be given solo writing credits.

NEXT TIME:

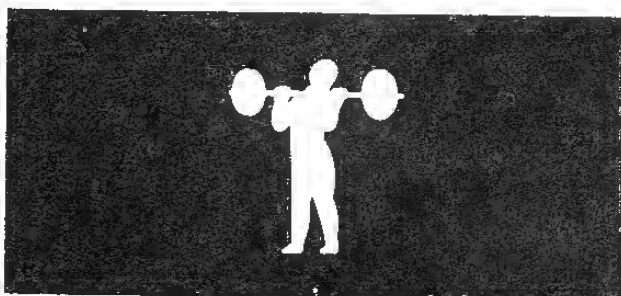
WE CHECK-IN WITH HOWARD CHAYKIN



On *Blackhawk*...sex...sacred icons...and ethnic stereotypes in comics...communism...how *Flagg!* has gone in the toilet...*Time*² one and two...*Watchmen*-Moore...*Dark Knight*/Miller...the *Flagg!* movie...*The Shadow* past and present...him being the anti-Christ...editors...fans...getting in and out of comics...his assistants...his cats...and his art.

And that's just the first answer in this interview by Kim Thompson. What's more—a *Flagg!* cover by Chaykin!

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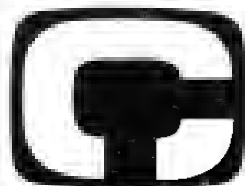


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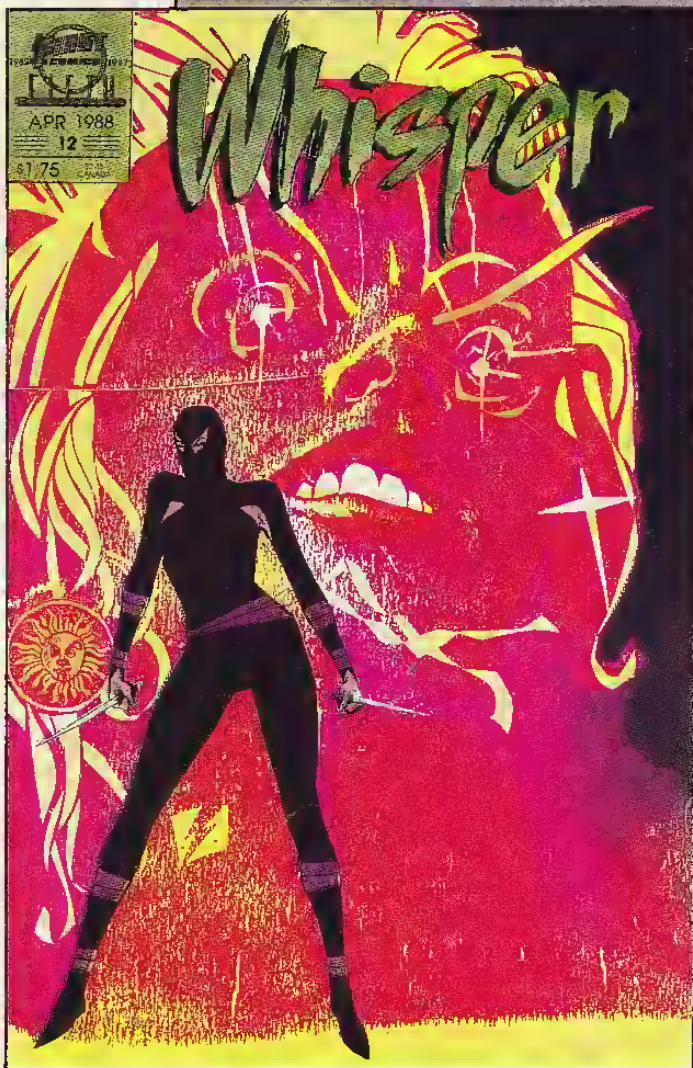
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